

# Tiere *terra friulana* furlane

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The mouth of the River Stella. Photograph by Stefano Zanini.

# Forced to Focus on Quality... for the Pleasure of the Rest of the World

In the 60s, agriculture in Friuli was based on general farming: every farm produced milk, meat, wine and grains. The leading sector was undoubtedly that of breeding dairy cattle which meant in practice 650 cooperative dairies. The cheese that was obtained, known as Montasio, was of high quality. Over 50% of it was consumed in the farm itself and was accompanied by a traditional food of our land, *'polenta'*, a mush obtained from corn.

As for wine, beside some limited high quality productions, production in general was concentrated on nutritional purposes, to face harsh rural life. According to this logic, the percentage of special-

ised vineyards was low, most of the grapevines were grown in spaced rows and cereals were cultivated between them. But that society and that landscape were going to change abruptly because of the irruption of modernity and technical progress. General farming had to yield to specialization. Many stables were closed and the dairies decreased drastically in number. Many farmers turned to the monoculture of corn, but this didn't affect much the regional economy. Others began to specialize in the production of wine, taking advantage of the special geographical and climatic conditions of the region.

The charm of the landscape and the care of the buildings are elements that complement the wine economy and are a resource for tourism. Lis Facis Wine Farm, in the municipality of Cividale del Friuli.

The average size of the farms in Friuli, mostly small, necessarily led to quality production, which was the only way to compete in an increasingly complex market. In this sense, there is a saying among our vine growers: In Friuli we are "forced" to concentrate on quality. The climate of our region, beside increasing wine quality, makes it possible to grow large and diversified vine varieties and, therefore, to get a production diversification that reflects our identity, that is an hinge between the Mediterranean world and the continental European one. Our wines are different from those of Austria even if we are so close, but they are also different from those of the Italian region of Apulia or from those of Dalmatia. Their characteristics, so multi-faceted, are a priceless heritage.

The vineyards are now all specialized and have a visual impact on the landscape which is extraordinarily positive, dialoguing with its peculiarities and characterizing it. The cellars, once poor buildings with the floor often in clay, have become "temples" of wine: the study of the architecture, the attention to detail, the elegance of the houses and the non-rare presence of works of art are all elements that complement this wine economy. And the new directives of the Regional Tourism Plan, rightly, consider these aspects as one of the priorities.

In the last century's, 60s and 70s, the regional demand of wine was twice the production. Now the situation is reversed because we

export half of the wine we produce, and we have changed from a production of wine sold mainly in bulk, to a production that is mostly sold in bottles.

This has given rise to a production chain that has important industrial implications. Think, for example, to the production of machines for oenology and all the equipment that is required for wineries. And we cannot forget to mention the production of labels for bottles and the production of corkscrew that can count on artists and graphics of proven talent.

Surely the creation of DOC zones (Denomination of Controlled Origin) has stimulated the advancement of quality of our wines, but the credit goes mainly to wine growers who have been able to understand the times and the changes that were necessary. Many of them, it must be said, work in a difficult environment such as the hills or the karst highlands. As for the plains we must say that they are largely formed by the 'grave' lands (a word that Friulian has in common with French), where the stones prevail. Only in recent times the tenacity of our farmers have been able to make them profitable. But it is precisely on that stony 'grave' lands, beside cooperative cellars of considerable size, that the nursery activity related to viticulture has developed. If the wines of the Graves of Bordeaux are known throughout the world, vine nurseries of our 'grave' lands supply grapevines all over the world. Here there are the real 'roots of wine' and Friuli is a world leader in



Wine originated ancillary economic activities of all respect; one of these is the production of labels, often delegated to also famous designers, artists and graphics. Sometimes they can be an attractive advertising vehicle for both cultural tourism and mass tourism. The Merlot grape variety, which in Friuli gives a wine that bears the same name, in the second half of the 19th century has spread in our region and has gained primacy among the red wines. The label shown here dates back to the early 70s of the 20th century.

the production of grafted cuttings. The future of our region, therefore, is related to the vine and wine: we have the right climate and, above all, we have the human resources and professionalism. The prestigious achievements, unthinkable only twenty years ago, do not make us neglect the problems that, here as elsewhere, this sector is facing. The pragmatism of our wine-makers and their ability to fight common struggles reassure us and, above all, make it possible for us to reassure those who appreciate our wine around the world: the Friulian wine will delight also future generations.

*Sergio Bolzonello*  
Vice-President  
of the Autonomous  
Friuli Venezia Giulia Region

# Tiere *terrafriulana* furlane

## Tiere furlane

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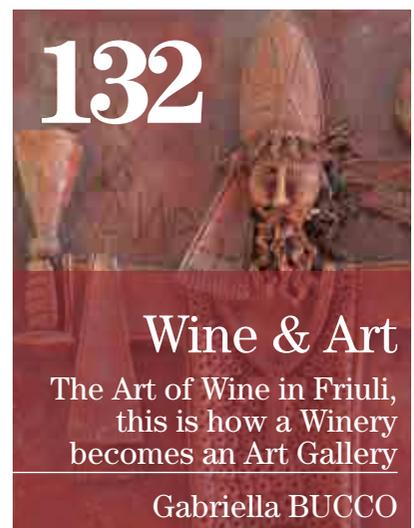
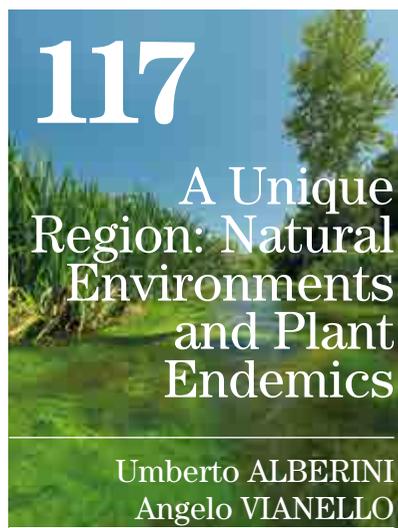
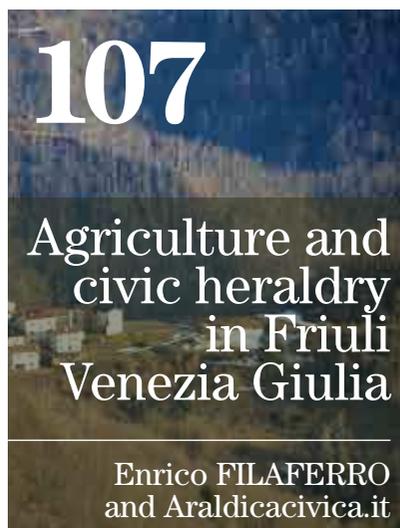
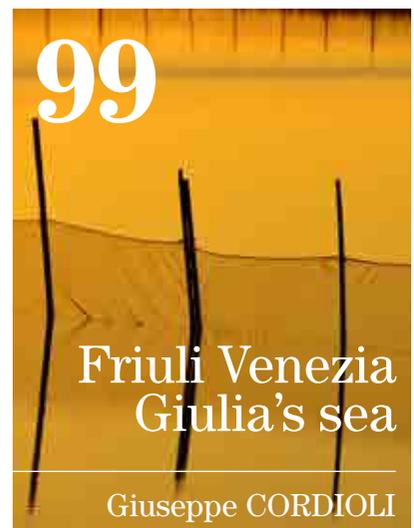
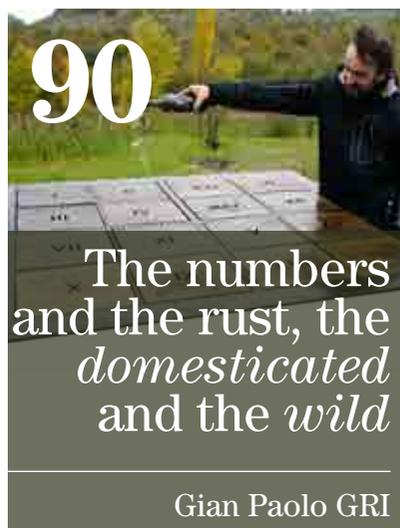
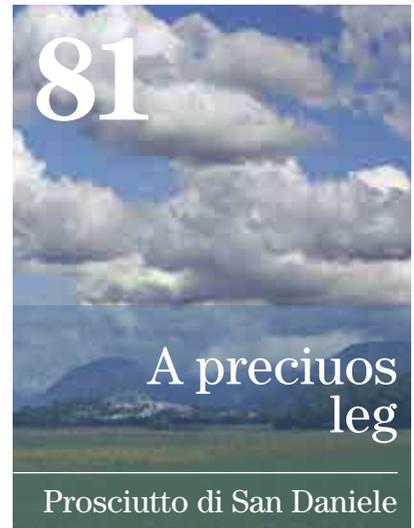
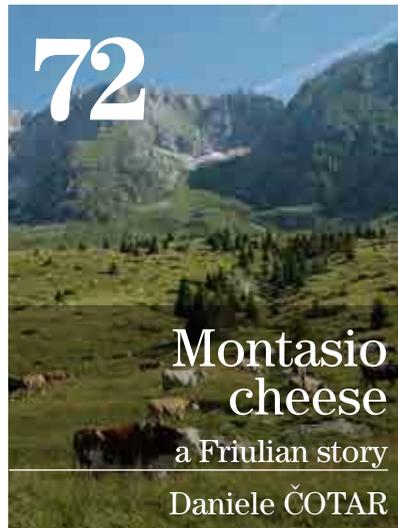
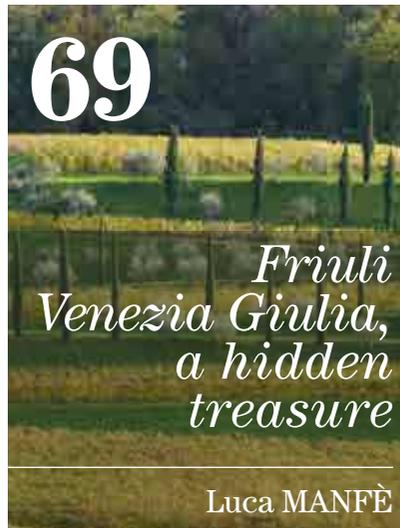
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The Abbey of Rosazzo has been famous since the Middle Ages for its wine, in particular for Ribolla. It is here that a vine, with such very particular characteristics like the Pignolo, was saved.



Sauvignon: the lower side of the leaf.



Enos COSTANTINI

# Monsieur le Sauvignon

An all-worthy French became citizen of the world (but first it became Friulian)

*The aim of this brief presentation of the Sauvignon variety is outlining its history, first in Friuli and then in Italy, with a tail piece regarding its motherland, the douce France.*

## S Sauvignon in Friuli

Sauvignon, also known in Friuli as "Aromatic Tocai", is a grape variety that comes from France. It has not been present in our region for long since the earliest documentations of its being grown trace back only to 1880s. But all is relative: which other Italian region, which European or non-European country could boast such a long tradition in cultivating Sauvignon? Almost no-one; better still, probably no-one at all, except France. And I can tell you more: in

those times, when quantity was more profitable than quality, the Friulian people, although they did not completely disregard it, preferred another variety which is similar to Sauvignon, both in name and for genetics: the Sauvignonasse.

That they used the name Tocai for Sauvignonasse, is merely a minor detail due to the fact that both varieties, which came here from the Sauternes region, were cultivated for the production of



Beautiful Sauvignonasse's bunches. This French variety, which the Friulians call Tocai, probably arrived along with Sauvignon during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its productive characteristics, and the way it adapts to our environment, have made it very successful, to the point that Tocai has become the quintessential Friulian white wine.

Sauternes-type or Tokaji-type sweet wines. Let us not forget that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century sweet wines were still regarded as very fine wines, with consequences up to the 1930s.



One of the features that separate Sauvignon from Sauvignonasse is the hair on the lower side of the leaf: Sauvignon (on the left) is tomentose, whereas Sauvignonasse (on the right) is almost glabrate.

## Sauvignon and Sauvignonasse

It is likely that, after the variety mixing that had to be carried out after the devastation of vineyards provoked in the 1850s by powdery mildew (*Oidium tuckerii*), both Sauvignon and Sauvignonasse reached Friuli together and were cultivated together in the same vineyards.

Of course, vine growers did not miss their differences, and they knew how to separate them in order to keep Sauvignon on small plantation for producing *élite* wines, and spread Sauvignonasse as much as they could, since it was much more adaptable. This variety allowed (and still allows):

- high yield (fundamental and cherished up to thirty years ago);
- a high alcohol by volume rate: this feature, linked to the wine's preservation, was cherished because the most widespread traditional varieties could hardly reach 10% alc/vol.;

- dry and sweet wines productions. Nowadays the production is for the most part dry Sauvignonasse/Tocai, but there are still some very rare cases of sweet Sauvignonasse;
- cultivation on both slopes and flatlands, that in turn allows for fine products, but on flatlands "mass" products prevail;
- production of both high-quality fine wines and wine for ordinary consumption or table wines. This characteristic offers a long-run elasticity both in time and space: the Sauvignonasse, with its green biotype, proved to be ideal when high productions of wines for ordinary consumptions were favoured. Nowadays, especially on slopes, winemakers focus on Sauvignonasse's quality, since its yellow biotype is always the best one;
- cultivation on any type of ground, both on "grava" (such is the name of gravelly and dry terrains of higher flatlands), on clayey terrains of the lowest flatlands, on "caranto" (a sitty clay loam, quite compact)

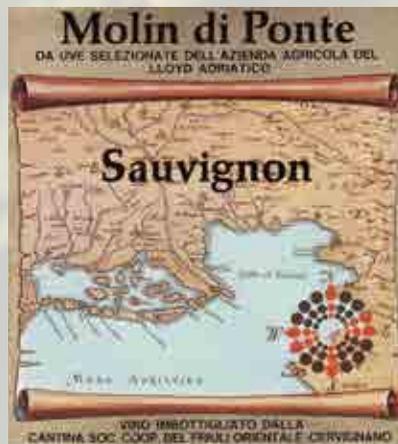
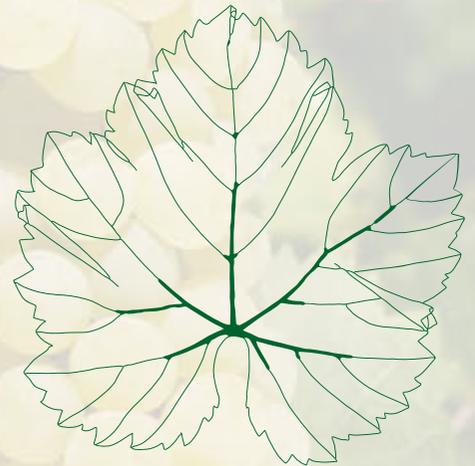
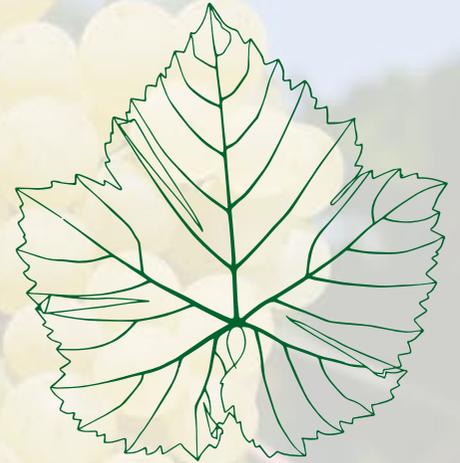
- nearby Portogruaro, and so on;
- substitution of grape varieties that produced Ribolla wine, the typical production of the eastern hills that was already out-dated.
- to move from wines based on blends (mixing of grapes) to single-variety wines: Sauvignonasse/Tocai is better for single-variety wine-making, whereas many traditional varieties had to be mixed in order to obtain a finished product that had to be simultaneously well-balanced and complete;
- to meet exactly the taste of the Friulians, who hoisted the Sauvignonasse/Tocai flag, and made it a table wine as well, and an aperitif, a pre-dinner wine (such as the French *pastis*): a well-established habit, a costume, a daily routine people love to indulge in, but not only just before meals. A glass of white wine had, and still has, the ability of loosing the tongues of Friulians, who are generally thrifty with words and, as they say, a little grumpy.

With time, people started to favour quality and, as the statistics show, Sauvignonasse and Sauvignon have opposite trends as far as their cultivated areas are concerned: Sauvignon has increased in its preferred terrain, the slope, while Sauvignonasse has decreased after leaving the flatlands in order to perch high on those hills where it can better express its organoleptic potentiality. Hence, both French cousins have found a new home, or at least *le bon endroit*, on the eastern hills of Friuli. They have been here for at least 150 years. Similarities between Sauvignon and Sauvignonasse/Tocai were well-known to Friulian winemakers, who did not call “Aromatic Tocai” the Sauvignon for nothing. Without anything better to do, researchers and journalists droned on uselessly and made up many stories about the origin of the Friulians' Tocai instead of focusing on their undeniable similarity, both as far as the grape's shape and the wines' characteristics are concerned.

### In Friuli in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Although we have not systematically investigated all nineteenth-century sources, we have enough information to presume, as we stated above, that Sauvignon appeared for the first time in Friuli after the devastation provoked by powdery mildew, when the most farsighted local land-owners arranged for other wine varieties to come from other European regions, in order to

rebuild wine-making using grapes more suitable for producing quality wines. The first document referring to Sauvignon that we have found dates back to 1884, when earl Teodoro de la Tour introduced a Sauvignon wine at an exhibition set in Gorizia, whereas the grape variety is referred to in Campolongo in 1886. Giovanni Bolle, who at that time directed the Imperial-Royal Chemical-Agricultural Experimental Institute of Gorizia, supports its cultivation in a report that can be found in the documentation of the 4th Austrian Wine Convention held in Gorizia in 1891. From this and other documents it is clear that Sauvignon came to Friuli from the Bordeaux area and not from the Loire Valley: in all these documents it is always linked to Sémillon and, regrettably, it is said that it would never reach the Sauternes' quality. This geographic origin is still mentioned in



Fine Sauvignon bottle label designed from an old map showing the lower Friulian plain, the islands of the Grado and Marano lagoon and the Gulf of Trieste. Franco Dreossi's collection.

Sauvignonasse's leaf (above) and Sauvignon's leaf (below). In 1937, in a work entitled *Rilievi ampelografici comparativi su varietà di Vitis vinifera*, Professor Italo Cosmo compared the Friulian Tocai, Sauvignon and Sémillon. He did not know that Tocai was all but Sauvignonasse; his evaluations indicate that both varieties have similar ampelographic features. Obviously, at the time it was known that Sauvignon and Sémillon did come from the Bordeaux area, but many stories were still told about Tocai's mythical Hungarian origin, because nobody wanted to admit what the French scholars had found out: that the Friulian Tocai is nothing more than Sauvignonasse.

both Friulian and Italian works on ampelography, which explains also the simultaneous arrival of Sauvignonasse, a grape variety that was reported in the Sauternes region at the end of the 19th century.

### In Friuli at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Sauvignon has been present in the Austrian side of Friuli since the beginning of the 20th century, even if its use was recorded only for marginal purposes, such as second fermentation of its marc to enrich weak wines and for the production of raisin (*L'agricoltore goriziano*, years 1902 and 1908). Two Sauvignon from the Friuli area which was still part of the Austrian Empire at that time, respectively from Cormòns and Terzo, were present at a wine exhibition of all the empire wines held in Vienna in 1909.

In 1921 Udine is the setting of a Friulian grapes exhibition, and Sauvignon is among the best ones. In 1923 the *Ampelografia friulana* by Norberto Marzotto was printed, in which also Sauvignon found its own place. After reviewing the Italian and French bibliography on the matter, the author emphasises the vigour of the variety and by way of example he mentions a Sauvignon vine of the Baradel brothers' estate in Ronchis: its shoots were 30 meter-long and they could yield two hundreds kilos of grapes if they were to be radially cordon-trained. However we are talking of local folklore and not about exact documentation since

Norberto Marzotto, in his *Ampelografia del Friuli* in 1923, indicates the presence of Sauvignon's vines that may yield large production, even if it is just on occasions. That is possible by using particular type of training and in certain conditions, but it cannot be said for this variety in general. The picture we include was taken in Buttrio on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2014.



there is no evidence regarding the variety's diffusion in the region.

During the 1930s, professor Giovanni Dalmaso, in charge of the Experimental Wine-making Station of Conegliano, suggests to use both Sauvignon and Sauvignonasse to produce high-quality wines in the Gorizia province, but he supports the use of Sauvignonasse in the Udine province. The 4th March 1935 issue of the weekly newspaper *L'agricoltura friulana* is very flattering with a

Sauvignon from Aquileia: "Sauvignon adds to Aquileia a most delicate wine, with golden tones, and very aromatic; these are values that are enhanced, even sublimated, in the Riesling renano". At that time, the Riesling renano (Rhine Riesling) was the basis of comparison for any quality white wine.

In 1943 Sauvignon is said to be "fundamental for Collio's white wines", and the Gorizia province is, along with Treviso and Vicenza, one of the very few areas



"Osterie", taverns, purchased cask wine and then they bottled it, using original labels to decorate the bottle. This tavern, "da Tilio" in Lucinico in the municipality of Gorizia, bears the picture of the Gorizia's castle, coat of arms of the city, and the writing *Vini classici dei colli friulani* "classical wines of the Friulian hills". All this happened before DOC were established, but the interesting thing about it is that Sauvignon was regarded as a "classical" wine of the Friulian hills.

### War and aftermath

From the information hereby reported it is possible to presume that Sauvignon was marginal to that kind of wine-making in which the product quality was above all an "ideological" goal, that only "professors", experts, scholars and specialists spoke of, and that was attainable in few vineries, those that were particularly advanced and able to cope with a still narrow market. Most wine was produced for on-farm consumption or for a local market easily satisfied, where at most only top taverns demanded quality. Given the wide regional demand, there were not many people who could give up quantity, such as that ensured by Sauvignonasse (i.e. Friulian Tocai). But Friulians did not turn down Sauvignon. Many plants of this variety remained hidden in vineyards among different varieties, and it was often mixed up with Sauvignonasse. There were always those who cultivated it in a single variety vineyards, and even in a period far from being easy such as WWII, some vineyards were planted. For instance, it is documented that in 1944 in Torreano 1,200 vines were planted and in 1945 in Cividale 700 vines were planted,

followed by further 700 vines planted after the war in Rocca Bernarda (Pascolini 1961).

In 1952, baron Leo Economo of Aquileia with his Sauvignon won the first prize for white wines at the 6th Wine Exhibition of Pramaggiore.

### Geographers' perception

In order to know a specific variety, it is not enough to turn to specialists and journalist of the wine sector, but it is as much as interesting to turn to other sources if we want to understand how this variety was perceived in different social environment or by ordinary people. Both scholars and ordinary people still regard Sauvignonasse (Friulian Tocai) as a local, native, typically Friulian variety, yet it has been proven that it originated from France and that it had spread in Friuli quite recently.

What about Sauvignon? It is known that Sauvignon is a French variety, yet it is considered a typical production of our region, not only now that it is trendy, but even Geography books of Friuli Venezia Giulia show it. For instance, a book intended for young readers and published in 1978, but that was written for sure a few years be-

in Italy where the Sauvignon is used in single-variety vinification, whereas in the other provinces its grapes are mixed with other varieties (Montanari and Ceccarelli 1943).

After that, Sauvignon is reported to be cultivated both in the Udine province and in the Gorizia province (Montanari and Ceccarelli 1952), but there are not relevant information about quantity. On the contrary we know that the Sauvignon of Gorizia "is an actual caress and a smile of life".



Sauvignon vine affected by esca, a grapevine trunk disease. Sauvignon is particularly sensitive to it, and it is for such reason that many winegrowers choose not to grow it.

fore for it does not even mention the 1976 earthquake, states that among the wines of the Gorizia area there are Pinot, in its different chromatic declinations, Collio's Ribolla, Silvaner, Merlot, Refosco and Sauvignon (Lugani 1978, 177). At page 194 of the same volume, it is claimed that Farra d'Isonzo is renowned for its wines: Tokay (sic), Pinot, Sauvignon, Verduzzo and Merlot.

In a thicker volume intended for adult and cultivated readers (Valussi 1961, 250), Sauvignon is mentioned among regional wines alongside Friulian Tocai. Therefore, even in the 1950s the author deemed the Sauvignon as an important wine...

It is worth mentioning that in the following 1971 edition of the book, Sauvignon is not mentioned among regional wines (Valussi 1971, 302).

### Friulian enography

In a 1969 publication, Sauvignon enters the Friulian enography, a showcase for the most important varieties cultivated in the region, along with a picture of its bunch and a brief note. These are the words dedicated to Sauvignon: "This wine is not produced in large quantities; the area of production is limited to the eastern hills of Friuli and Collio. This is a fine wine for suppleness, delicate in fragrance and generous and exquisite taste. Dry, round and uniformly palatable, it is best savoured with light courses and also between meals" (Nussi 1969).

### A 1979 survey

The survey of 1979 (Castagnaviz 1980) is particularly interesting because it both states how many kilos of grapes were produced

and it compares Sauvignon with Sauvignonasse, on flatlands and hillside alike. On flatlands 375.2 tons of Sauvignon and 2,270.8 tons of Sauvignonasse were produced. Sauvignon is therefore a little niche for quality.

On the hillside 530.3 tons of Sauvignon and 6,717.5 tons of Sauvignonasse were produced: both varieties are productions of quality. Looking at average prices of grapes could be as much as relevant: on flatlands Sauvignon was sold at 650 Lire per kilo, whereas on the hillside it could reach 1,000 Lire per kilo.

As far as Sauvignonasse is concerned the price for the flatlands was 450 Lire per kilo, whereas for the hillside it could reach 850 Lire per kilo.

Therefore 6,717.5 tons of hillside-produced Sauvignon had the same value as 12,688.5 tons of flatland-produced Sauvignonasse. Sauvignon had a higher economic weight if we consider the whole volume of grapes: 15,731,735,000 Lire of Sauvignonasse for 774,180,000 Lire of Sauvignon.

If we consider the whole value of all grapes produced in Friuli, both red and white, Sauvignonasse corresponds to 20%, Sauvignon is slightly less than 1%.

If we consider only white wines, Sauvignonasse corresponds to 49% of the whole production, Sauvignonasse a mere 2.4%.

Sauvignon was a vine, and a wine, for few people, but these data are enough to show how Friuli has always kept alive this small quality flame. Other grape varieties of

French origin have not had this chance and have been completely forgotten after their arrival, some for good, others, such as Pinot grigio, have been brought back to life for their productive and commercial qualities.

### Wine in the Eighties

In 1984, 314,000 gallons of Sauvignon were produced in the regional DOC (Controlled Designation of Origin) areas, a mere 4% of the whole DOC wines (Sauvignonasse reached 23%). It is worth to know that Sauvignon was cultivated especially on hillsides (DOC Collio and DOC Colli Orientali) and in the DOC Isonzo, whereas its presence is almost insignificant in other DOC Areas of the flatlands.

From 1981 to 1985 there was a positive trend, and the acres of cultivated Sauvignon increased on the hillsides. For instance, from 239 acres in 1981, the DOC Collio reached 380 acres in 1985, with a similar increase in the DOC Colli Orientali and DOC Isonzo which, even if it is situated on flatlands, followed the same trend of the hillsides.

A document of 1986 describes two type of Sauvignon wine:

"If the wine is made along with the skin of the grapes, it will be golden in colour, full-bodied, and little delicate in its aroma.

If the wine is made without skins, the colour will be yellow-greenish, with a finely aromatic taste, delicate, dry, with a bitter aftertaste, velvety and supple" (*Relazione sullo stato dell'agricoltura in Friuli Venezia Giulia nel 1986-*



A beautiful row of Sauvignon, cordon-trained and spur-pruned, that includes more than one biotypes of the variety. Albana di Prepotto, August 2014.

87, Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia).

### Cultivated areas trends

From 1980 to 1990 the cultivated areas of Sauvignon doubled. The absolute figure is still low (from 2% to 4% of total cultivated areas), but it is a clear sign. In 1986 the methanol affair was a nightmare for Italian winemakers and, in order to wake up from it, the only path to follow was better quality. And with Sauvignon one can only make quality wines. In the same period white wines started to be "trendy", which caused the Sauvignonasse-cultivated areas to increase.

In 1999 Sauvignon doubled again its cultivated area reaching 9% of the whole, its best result so far.

After that, it decreased down to 6% of the whole cultivated area in 2011 (3,182 acres). Sauvignonasse was in an even worse situation, passing from 19% of 1990 to an alarming 8% (3,985 acres) in 2011. A dangerous competitor had risen on the horizon: Prosecco (Glera), which in 2011 reached almost 7,413 acres of cultivated areas, 16% of the whole.

### Recent data

In 2014 in our region there were 3,188 acres of Sauvignon-cultivated areas, equal to 5.47% of the whole vine cultivation. These figures suggest that this variety is holding steady. Sauvignonasse (the Friulian Tocai) is still decreasing, but it has not been whitewashed by

Prosecco as it was dreaded: it can count still on 3,941 acres, nearly 7% of the whole cultivated areas. Together, Sauvignon and Sauvignonasse, reach above 12% of the whole areas (7,129 acres out of 56,985). There is therefore still a good margin of manoeuvre, also because, since the rise of Glera (Prosecco), Sauvignonasse (Friulian Tocai) is not productivity-driven any more but it focuses only on quality. A prove of this is that Sauvignon and Sauvignonasse are both prevailing in the hillside and foothill areas, which have hoisted the flag of quality.

### Red and green stems

In Friuli there is a variety known as Refosco dal peduncolo rosso (meaning 'red rachis' or 'red stem'). Such name was given it in the 19th century to distinguish it from the Refosco variety or biotype with the green stem, less relevant from a quality point of view. This distinction in the colour of the stems or pedicels, due to the different genetically driven colouring substances, can be found also in other varieties, such as Sauvignon and Sauvignonasse. Professor Carlo Petrusi, in his lasting work as an ampelographer, is the first one to have described this features in both varieties (Petrusi 2013, 241-247). According to Petrusi there is still no way to outline different oenological potentialities between both biotypes; so far it can only be mentioned that, in both varieties, when we taste the grapes, the biotype with the red stem is more aromatic.



Sauvignon's leaf with red rachis (on the left) and Sauvignon's leaf with green rachis (on the right).



Plant tips and detail of herbaceous shoots of Sauvignon with red rachis (above) and Sauvignon with green rachis (on the left) respectively.

Sauvignon VCR 243 clone, from Cividale; small, cylindrical, straggly bunch; very aromatic.

Sauvignon VCR 248 clone, from Rosazzo; small bunch with little wing; aromatic.

Sauvignon VCR 334 clone, from Buttrio; medium, semi-tight and winged bunch; medium aromatic.



## Friuli for Sauvignon

Sauvignon is a French variety, but Friuli has shaped its genetics. By 1970s the VCR - Vivai cooperativi (cooperative nurseries) of Rauscedo had developed a clone, called R3, which immediately stood out, and still does, for its positive peculiarities. Sauvignon R3 was definitely different from other clones, such as those developed by the CRA-VIT (Centre for Research in Viticulture) of Conegliano: if on one hand it was poorly productive and unstable, on the other it was stronger and, above all, it had a high oenological value, supported by an aromatic taste that hinted at vegetables, peppers and fruits. During the 1980s French clones became very hip but only one (INRA-ENTAV 108) could keep up with expectations both in agronomic (good and steady productivity) and oenological terms (scents of apricots and ripe fruits). The range of clones

started to narrow again since wine-makers focused entirely on R3 and 108 that, if conveniently blended, produced a Sauvignon with a high oenological profile. However Rauscedo is still selecting new clones and the cooperative nurseries have gone as far as Moravia (Czech Republic) in order to locate new biotypes belonging to the "vegetal" Sauvignon group. In 2009 Sauvignon VCR 328 was approved, while others biotypes are still waiting for approval. Carlo Petrusi, who is carrying out an important work of selection on our eastern hills, has selected clones such as VCR 236, a "French" VCR 237 and a "vegetal" VCR 389. He has identified a range of new clones (VCR 243, VCR 335, VCR 336, VCR 337, etc.) by observing old vineyards and scattered vines around Cividale, Buttrio, Prepotto, Rocca Bernarda and nearby the Rosazzo's abbey. His work of selection and char-

acterization of Sauvignon is very fruitful thanks to Sauvignon's high variability.

Furthermore, Sauvignon is a good parent: the new disease-resistant varieties developed by the Udine University (Early Sauvignon, Petit Sauvignon, Sauvignon Dorée) have shown they have inherited the best quality characteristics of white Sauvignon.

## Experimentation in Friuli

Among the first (and few) experimentations on Sauvignon carried out in Italy, two of them – promoted by the Udine University (professor Peterlunger) and that took place in the 1990s at the vineyard of the Agrarian Institute of Cividale del Friuli (professor Petrusi) – are worthy of mention. The first one (Peterlunger *et al.*, 1995) compared different rootstocks of this variety and concluded that: "If our goal is big produc-

Sauvignon VCR 335 clone, from Buttrio; medium-to-small, cylindrical bunch; aromatic.

Sauvignon VCR 336 clone, from Buttrio; very small, cylindrical, straggly bunch; elliptic berries; aromatic.

Sauvignon VCR 337 clone, from Buttrio; small bunch with similar features as VCR 336.

Sauvignon VCR 338 clone; from Buttrio; medium-to-large, winged, tight bunch; productive.



tion regardless of quality, the most suitable rootstock is 420A, since it assures high and relatively steady productions in the long run, to the detriment of grapes' quality (low sugar levels and high overall acidity). If our goal is quality, with a particularly high sugar level, we should chose K5BB and 1103P, which, however, have resulted in moderate productions. If we want to reach an even situation between quantity and quality, the more suitable rootstocks appear to be SO4 and 3309, which assure good production levels and good quality characteristics".

The second experimentation, a graduation thesis, aimed to find how the density of the vineyard could affect Sauvignon's growth and productivity of seedlings (Cestari 1997-98). The result was that the best number of vines per hectare was about 3,550 and 4,500.

## Sauvignon in Italy

After this introduction on Sauvignon in Friuli it is worth saying a few words about Sauvignon in Italy. In some regions it has recently received great critical and public acclaim, but its history on the Peninsula started in the 19th century.

### Outsiders' perceptions

To get an idea of how a grape variety, and the wine it produces, is perceived outside the experts' and wine-makers' world we may turn to a dictionary. Indeed, it is a very hard task to find the word Sau-

Sauvignon in the *Ampelografia universale* of earl Giuseppe of Rovasenda.

**Sauvignon.** GIRONDA. A. 321, 325. O. 135. 237. Squisito vitigno di primissimo ordine nel BORDOLESE che dà i vini di SAUTERNE e di CHATEAU IQUEM. B. (47). Riesce perfettamente nelle colline SALUZZESI, havvi il bianco ed il rosso. Credo non si possa piantare un miglior vitigno in ordine ad una buona vinificazione. Il suo frutto ha un leggiero sapore che direi di fico secco zuccherino, e che in qualche vino da me assaggiato in FRANCIA si traduceva in gradevolissimo profumo, direi di mandorlo amarognolo.

— **à gros grains.** G. B. Sin. di **Sauvignon** de la CORRÈZE o **Muscadelle**. B. (43). Differisce interamente dall'antecedente.

— **blanc.** L. GIRONDA. Descr. e Dis. R. *Jour. Vit.* III, pag. 396. A. 323. B. Nel JURA è così chiamato da alcuni ben a torto il **Gamet blanc**.

— de la CORRÈZE. O. 137, 374. Id. al **Sauvignon à gros grains**. B. Da mensa.

— de la NIÈVRE o **blanc fumé**. Il conte OD. 327 lo crede differente da quello di BORDEAUX.

— de POULLY sur LOIRE. Descr. e dis. R. È il **bianco** del BORDOLESE.

— **jaune.** G. B. Identico al **bianco**.

— **noir.** G. P. JURA. È detto anche **Noirin**. In sostanza è un **Pinot**.

— **rose.** GIRONDA. B. Identico al **bianco** nei caratteri, solo differente nel colore del frutto.

vignon inside an Italian language dictionary, and this is a clear sign that it is not so popular among the public. Nonetheless we have found it in the not so common *Lessico universale italiano* (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, vol. XX, Rome, 1978), where its definition is as follows: "White grape variety much cultivated in the Bordeaux area, where it produces the renowned wines of Sauternes. It was introduced in other countries and also in Italy; if the condition are fitting it yields very fine wines. Its bunches are small and tight, its berries are small, spherical and yellow-greenish, its flavour is slightly aromatic". Although the introduction is correct, we can see that the idea of the Sauvignon being a typical Bordeaux variety, linked to Sauternes'

production, was widespread. Its introduction has definitely improved in the *Vocabolario della lingua italiana*, published by the same Institute in 1994: "Grape variety for the production of white wine much cultivated in the Loire's area and other regions, especially in the Bordeaux's area; it is also widespread in other wine countries, among which Italy, where, if the conditions are fitting, it yields very fine wines [...] The wines that comes from it (in Italy especially in the Venezie and in South Tyrol), take the same name and have around 12% alcohol content, a dry, uniform and pleasant flavour, and its fragrance hints at fruits".

Hence Sauvignon is making its way into Italy.

Worth of mentioning is also that in 1974 *La Domenica del Corriere*,

a very popular weekly publication, while playfully introducing wines produced in Italy, dedicated the following words to Sauvignon: "It is a common bunch with a marked identity that yields an aromatic, pasty and intensely scented wine. It has got music in it, something that reminds of the human voice. You drink it and you feel like you are talking to it".

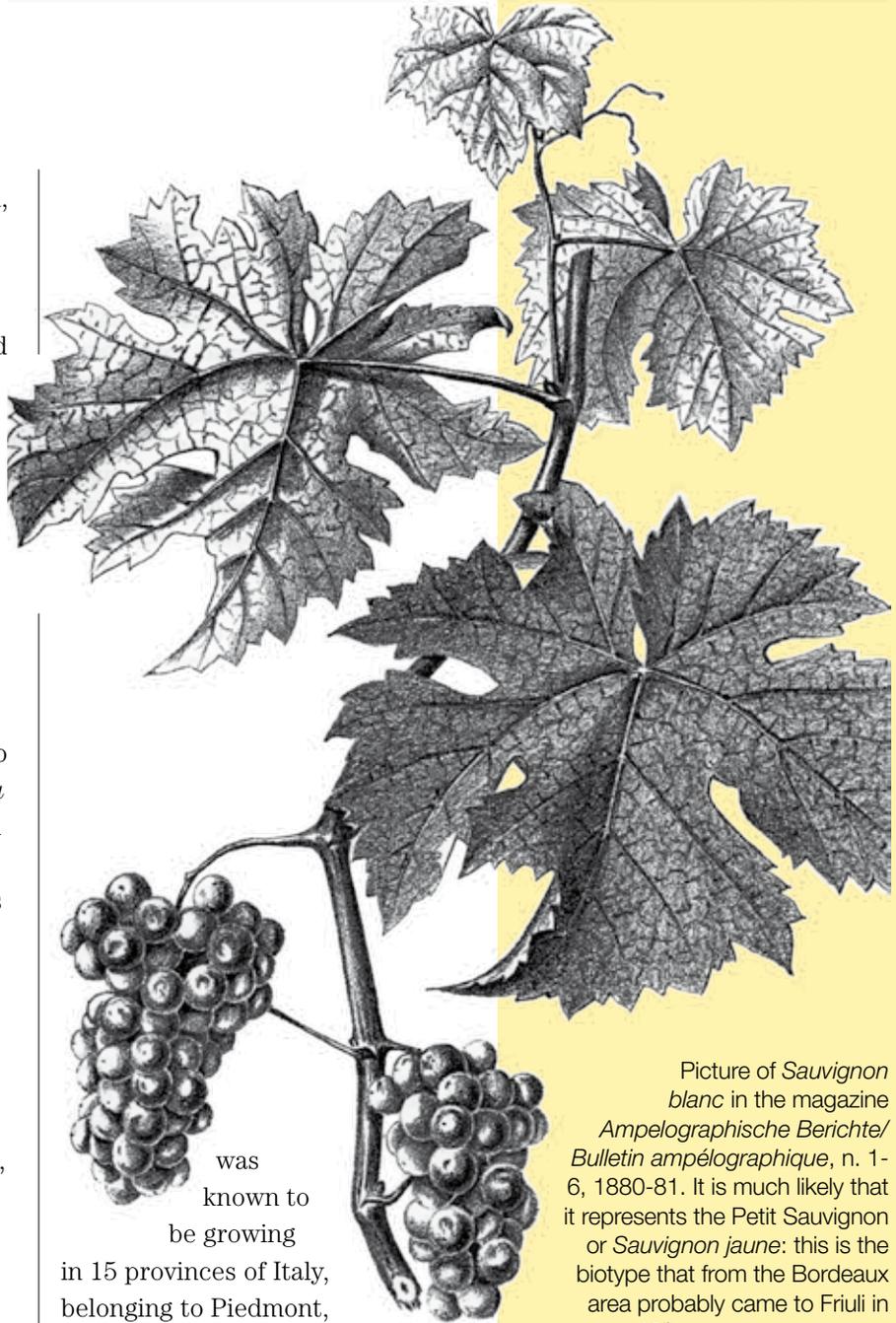
### In the earl's collection

In order to get a rough idea of the historic roots of Sauvignon in Italy first of all we have to refer to the *Saggio di una ampelografia universale*, which was published in 1877 by the Piedmontese earl Giuseppe of Rovasenda. From his brief notes it is possible to infer that he had tasted some French Sauvignon wines, which he extolled, but his knowledge of the variety is limited to the plants he collected on the Saluzzo's hills. If Sauvignon was already spreading, even slowly, in Italy, the earl of Rovasenda would not have failed to point it out.

### The 20<sup>th</sup> century begins

For a documented presence of Sauvignon in Italy we have to wait until 1903, when Salvatore Mondini published *Vitigni stranieri da vino coltivati in Italia*. The author includes Sauvignon among the French grape varieties of Gironde, along with Cabernet, Merlot, Sémillon, etc., strengthening the opinion, still widespread, that Sauvignon came from those lands.

According to Mondini Sauvignon



was known to be growing in 15 provinces of Italy, belonging to Piedmont, Veneto, Emilia, Marche, Tuscany, Lazio regions and the south of the Adriatic coast. From his dissertation we can infer that the variety was not so common in Italy because he listed less than thirty wineries that grew Sauvignon, frequently only for experimental purposes. It appears that the region where it was most widespread was Emilia, followed by Veneto. A couple of wineries stand out from the others: Caumont Caimi of Felino (Parma)

Picture of *Sauvignon blanc* in the magazine *Ampelographische Berichte/Bulletin ampélographique*, n. 1-6, 1880-81. It is much likely that it represents the Petit Sauvignon or *Sauvignon jaune*: this is the biotype that from the Bordeaux area probably came to Friuli in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; now it is the most widespread in the world. Oldest plants of Sauvignon that can still be found in Friuli were planted in the years that followed WWI, and are usually found scattered among vineyard or rows of Sauvignonasse (Friulian Tocai) and the elder winemakers called it "Aromatic Tocai". They all belong to the biotype with a small and cylindrical bunch, rounded or sometimes oval berries with a thick skin. They have an aromatic taste that may also be very strong. The bunch is rot-resistant and its weigh averages between 70 to 100 grams.

that grew 6 acres of Sauvignon along with Sémillon, producing 2,200 gallons of a type of wine similar to Sauternes; and Casalis from Potenza Picena (Macerata) that had been growing Sauvignon for more than 20 years with good results, but there is no clue about quantities.

These winegrowers are wealthy and high-ranking people (earls, marquises, knights, lawyers, etc.), who could probably afford to try out a variety not so easy to grow and not so much productive.

Sauvignon was also present in five private ampelographic collections, among which we mention the famous ones of Giuseppe Acerbi from Castelgoffredo (Mantova) and of earl Giuseppe of Rovasenda from Verzuolo (Cuneo): this is a plain sign that Sauvignon was relevant for researchers.

Sauvignon was also reported in three agriculture schools (Conegliano, Cesena, Catania) for experimental purposes.

Mondini believed he had enough information about the grape variety to come to the following conclusions: "All in all, Sauvignon growing in Italy is getting good results, and we may as well consider this variety as an important part in helping our country to remarkably improve production of fine white bottle-wines".

Hence Sauvignon was a kind of "spearhead" and it allowed to reach such productions that were considered exclusive at that time. "Fine white wines", even bottle-wines, were a luxury in that age.

### **A little wine but the good one**

Following the story of Sauvignon in Italy in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would prove itself an idle task. It was a completely secondary wine, flooded by a large quantity of everyday wines (in 1948, despite the war wounds were still bleeding, Italy produced 780 million gallons of wine), where there was no space for quality. However experts were still aware of its potentiality and, for instance, in 1943 Montanari and Ceccarelli wrote: "This fine wine could be produced differently in the provinces of Bolzano, Vicenza, Padua, Venice, Treviso, Trieste, Pula, if the wine was made with one single variety. On the contrary, this grape is usually blended with other grape varieties..."- They were speaking of "fine" wines that had a small weight on the whole quantity. It appears that only in the Gorizia province Sauvignon wine was made with that single variety. Towards the end of 1950s, the production of Sauvignon grapes in Italy was about 10,000 tons; 4,000 tons were produced in the Vicenza province, 3,000 in the Parma province, 1,000 in Friuli and the remaining in other provinces (Cosmo and Polsinelli 1960, 12). It was a small amount if we bear in mind that in 1959 the national production of wine was above 1,300 million gallons. In the same period of time, Professor Italo Cosmo, perhaps the Italian biggest authority on wine-making, who inspired the Italian legislation on wine, suggested

growing Sauvignon in the provinces of Gorizia, Trieste, Treviso, Vicenza, Bologna, Ferrara, Parma, Reggio Emilia and Como.

### **In South Tyrol**

South Tyrolean Sauvignon is today a good rival of Friulian Sauvignon. In the 1950s Sauvignon was rare both in South Tyrol and Friuli, but in the high Adige Valley it was already so esteemed that Montanari and Ceccarelli dedicated to it the following: "[In South Tyrol] this wine is not produced in remarkable quantities. The characteristics that distinguish it in the other Venetian regions are emphasised, but it is all the same fine for suppleness, delicate scent, generous and exquisite taste. Its colour is a bright golden with a hint of straw-yellow, its taste is pleasant because it is harmonic and has got an agreeably bitter aftertaste; it is a wine that warms you up without pushing into inebriation. It improves while aging; first of all it stirs imagination, and then it makes you ponder calmly. It is a pleasant wine also between meals".

### **The Seventies**

Indicative of Sauvignon importance in Italy during the 1970s is the dissertation about it in the colossal *Enciclopedia agraria italiana, volume X*, published in 1980. Our grape variety is briefly, coolly and detachedly introduced in a short paragraph five times as smaller than the paragraph dedicated to Sangiovese.

However, we are told that it is



This table, made by Greta Turković (*Ampelografski Atlas* 2003), represents a type of Sauvignon with medium-to-large bunches that is very common in France, whereas in Friuli prevails the type with medium-to-small straggly bunches.

registered in the national varieties catalogue (as per Ministerial Decree of 25th of May 1970) and that the provinces of Bologna, Bolzano, Como, Ferrara, Gorizia, Lucca, Florence, Piacenza, Padua, Pordenone, Parma, Reggio Emilia, Trieste, Treviso, Udine, Venice and Vicenza were allowed to grow it. Its grapes produced eight wines in Controlled Denomination of Origin areas, among which three belonged to our region, indicating clearly our territorial vocation. This propensity was present also in South Tyrol where the "Alto Adige Sauvignon" and the "Terlano Sauvignon" were produced. The remaining three wines were less competitive with

our product: Bianco of Scandiano (Reggio Emilia province), Colli Berici Sauvignon and Colli Bolognesi Sauvignon.

Outside DOCs our grape variety is less demanding. In fact, the above mentioned *Enciclopedia* informs us that: "Among table-wines produced using Sauvignon grapes there is the wine produced in the Bosco and Comacchio area in the province of Ferrara. It is a *petillant* wine, straw-yellow in colour, with an intense and perfumed scent, a dry and slightly bitter flavour, and 12% alcoholic content". Therefore we can infer that Sauvignon had not yet conquered the Peninsula, but had nonetheless created a bridgehead.

## The Nineties

In 1990 (ISTAT data) there were 7,280 acres of Sauvignon in Italy, 16,929 acres of Sauvignonasse (besides Friuli there was a strong production in Veneto) and more than 212,500 acres of Sangiovese!

## A little bit more of wine but much better

Nowadays everybody speaks about Sauvignon, but does not expect big surface areas: in 2010 there were in Italy 9,390 acres dedicated to this variety but still 177,174 acres of Sangiovese and almost 49,000 of Glera (Prosecco). However it is worth underlying that the Sauvignon-cultivated area has been increasing during the last forty years: in 1970 there were only 4,448 acres of this variety. This is an unmistakable sign that the market calls for quality, the real vocation of this grape.

## Sauvignon in France

Let us make a brief dive in Sauvignon history in France

### The first certified documents

The earliest certified document of the Sauvignon variety is to be found in a small seventeenth-century essay (Merlet 1690, 147) in which we read: *Le Sauvignon est un Raisin noir, assez gros & long, qui est hâtif, a un goust tres-relevé & des meilleurs. Le Sauvignon blanc a les mêmes qualitez, & l'un & l'autre sont rares et peu connus.*



Bunch and leaf of Sauvignon in an engraving of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From *Revue de Viticulture*, 1899.

The reader must not be surprised about a black Sauvignon, since as Pinot, its chromatic varieties can be grey (rose), black and white. Unlike Pinot, only white Sauvignon is common.

In the following century documentation increased: for instance in 1770 the agronomist and historian from Dijon Edme Bégouillet wrote that Sauvignons are very good grapes but rare and almost unknown (*Les sauvignons,*

*fort bons raisins, rares & peu connus*). Let us consider Rézeau 2000, 329: 1779 *Le Sauvignon produit peu...*; 1783-84 *Souvi-gnon fumé, ailleurs surin [...] raisin blanc, serré, excellent;* 1783-84 *Le Sauvignon. Le raisin en est très petit, très bon à manger et à faire du vin mais capiteux [...] fait un vin excellent et vif, mais il produit peu;* 1785 *Sauvignon, C'est, après les muscats, le raisin le plus parfumé.*

As far as the 19<sup>th</sup> century is concerned we take into account only this extolling document by Pierre-Constant Guillory: ... *le Sauvignon, dont le parfum est si aromatique et si suave qu'il peut être à juste titre considéré comme le premier des raisins blancs (Rapport sur la deuxième session du Congrès des vignerons français, réuni à Bordeaux, en septembre 1843).*

### The name

It is difficult to say something definite about the origin of the word Sauvignon. The most credited hypothesis so far traces its origin in the French word *sauvage*, "wild", pronounced differently in some French dialect. Some say that its leaves resemble the ones of the wild grapevine, but if we take a careful look, we can see that the leaves of the wild grapevine have many different shapes. We suppose that something in the way the plant stands or behaves may have reminded the wild grapevine to the unknown *vigneron* who gave it its name. Another proof is one of the old synonyms of Sauvignon, *Fié*, or *Fiers*, a vernacular word that comes from the Latin *ferus* "feral, wild".

### Geographic origin

Since Sauvignon came to Italy from the Bordeaux area, where it is blended to produce Sauternes wines, this area is often referred to as its cradle. But it appears that it is not precisely so if we think about its spreading along the

Loire Valley. In 1901 Cazeaux-Cazalet wrote: *Il paraît impossible de retrouver l'origine du Sauvignon. Depuis plusieurs siècles, il existait en France dans les vignobles blancs de Sud-Ouest, de l'Ouest et de l'Est...*

A recent and more categorical opinion is given by Robinson et al. 2012, 952: "Contrary to common belief, Sauvignon Blanc is unlikely to come from the Bordeaux area [...]. Instead it is more likely to have originated from the Val de Loire in France, where its earliest mention appeared under the old synonym Fiers in 1534 in chapter 25 of François Rabelais' *Gargantua...*".

This origin is also supported by the close relationship between Sauvignon and Savagnin. This is a linguistic link since also Savagnin appears to have originated from a French word, probably a patois one, that means "wild". But we are more interested in their genetic relationship: "Sauvignon Blanc has a parent-offspring relationship with Savagnin, which explains why the two varieties have sometimes been confused. Since Savagnin is mentioned much earlier in the literature, it would logically be the parent and Sauvignon Blanc the progeny, the other parent being unknown. [...] Since Savagnin most likely originated from north-eastern France and has never been mentioned in western France, Sauvignon Blanc was probably born somewhere in between" (Robinson et al. 2012, 953). The DNA analysis states that Sauvignon is the "sibling" of



Traminer is synonym for Savagnin, and Sauvignon blanc has a parent-offspring relationship with Savagnin.

widespread varieties in the Loire Valley, so there are enough evidence to believe that it originated from this area.

### **Intermezzo with Traminer**

Everybody says until he is blue in the face that Traminer originated from Tramin/Termenò, a village of South Tyrol. Since Traminer is a synonym for Savagnin, which in turn originated from north-eastern France or south-western Germany, it is an assumption we must reject. On the contrary, the explanation may be that, since in that part of Germany the Tramin/Termenò wine was very famous in the past, the grape variety was called after a renowned wine. There are countless instances of grape varieties that have been called after famous

wine (Tocai, Madera, Malvasia, Vernaccia, Refosco, Ribolla, etc.).

### **Gros Sauvignon and Petit Sauvignon**

The early ampelographic description of Sauvignons is found in the works of the above-mentioned Cazeaux-Cazalet, who first spoke about it in *Revue de Viticulture* (n. 289, 1899), and then inside the classical essay *Ampélographie* by Viala et Vermorel (Tome II, 1901), which can be consulted from the Internet.

Here we overlook red Sauvignon, that it is just an ampelographic curiosity, and rose Sauvignon (or *Sauvignon gris*), known only to few aficionados, and we focus on *Sauvignon blanc*. Nineteenth-century French ampelographers distinguished between



*Gros Sauvignon* also known as *Sauvignon vert* (on the left) and *Petit Sauvignon* also known as *Sauvignon jaune* are two biotypes of Sauvignon described by G. Cazeaux-Cazalet in 1899. The same author gives the same description in the second volume of the classical Viala and Vermorel treatise *Ampélographie*, published in 1901, from which both pictures were taken.

two not so different biotypes: *Gros Sauvignon* and *Petit Sauvignon*. The berries of the first one are greener, bigger and more rounded than *Petit Sauvignon*'s ones. The second is vulnerable to blossom drop (*coulture*), has a marked taste, it is more sugary and it ripens before. There are not any other relevant differences.

However it is very interesting to know the precise terminology: *Gros Sauvignon* is also known as *Sauvignon vert*, whereas *Petit Sauvignon* is also called *Sauvignon jaune* and *Sauvignon fumé*.

But pay attention: these are not synonyms of the variety *Sauvi-*

*gnon blanc*, but synonyms of different biotypes in the same variety *Sauvignon blanc*.

*Petit Sauvignon* (*Sauvignon jaune*) has always been more widespread than *Gros Sauvignon* (*Sauvignon vert*), therefore is the first one that came to Italy. Montanari and Ceccarelli (1943, 258) also support that: "In France are grown two subvarieties of Sauvignon called *large* or *green* and *small* or *yellow*, whose differences in shape are limited to the fruit. We must notice that the under-variety mostly grown in the Tre Venezie region is the *small* or *yellow* one, which is prevalent also in its country of origin".

### **Green Sauvignon must not be confused with Sauvignonasse**

Some French handbook state that in Besson, a small municipality of 800 inhabitants located in Alvernia, Sauvignonasse was called *Sauvignon vert*, and this assertion was enough for some researchers and journalists to spread the synonym. We want hereby underline that we cannot take the name that was given to Sauvignonasse a long time ago in a small village in France and generalize it, and that *Sauvignon vert* must only make reference to a variety of *Sauvignon blanc*, i.e. of sheer Sauvignon. As far as we are concerned, it is not possible to justify the synonym of *Zeleni Sauvignon* (green Sauvignon) used in Slovenia for Sauvignonasse, neither we are seduced by *Sauvignon verde* the name they use in Chile for the same variety.

## Ups and downs

From the nineteenth-century works and from how Cazeaux-Cazalet resumes it in 1901 we can infer that the fortune of Sauvignon in France was fluctuating: it has always benefited from the quality of the wine it produces, but it has always been hindered by its low production. Towards the end of the 17th century there was a decrease in its area of distribution, as well as of vineyards, due to poor productivity. Although in the first half of the 19th century there was an upswing as we find it in many French regions, at the end of the century, according to Cazeaux-Cazalet – with the exception of the Nièvre region where it is used to make the famous Pouilly-sur-Loire wine and the wine that comes from many *crus* of Cosne's *arrondissement* –, its importance had decreased remarkably. It was nowhere to be found in western and south-western France, except when it was used to make the famous Sauternes, but in small proportion (from one eighth to a quarter), to confer subtlety and aroma. Sauternes is made with three quarters of Sémillon and a little quantity of Muscadelle. A higher percentage of Sauvignon would be a problem because the overall production would be negatively affected and both the wine taste and *bouquet* would be too strong (Cazeaux-Cazalet 1901).

Nowadays its situation is improving again since Sauvignon has not only increased in the number of acres in those areas



Along with "great Sauvignons", France produce more humble ones but still remarkable. This Sauvignon from Touraine, historic French region, is not bad at all, has got a good price/quality ratio and it can be found in Italian supermarkets.

where it was traditionally grown, but it has also expanded to those French regions where it had never been present (for example in Provence, Corsica and above all Languedoc).

Galet (2000, 718) writes that cultivation of Sauvignon in France is constantly increasing, and it has passed from 13,700 acres in 1958 to 49,357 acres in 1998; in grapevine-nursery it is the ninth variety to be grown with nearly six millions of grafted cuttings in 1999 and the approval of almost twenty clones.

In 2009 Sauvignon reached the third position among grape varieties with white berries after Ugni Blanc (Trebiano toscano) and Chardonnay with 66,320 acres (Robinson *et al.* 2012, 954). We are also surprised to note that 28% of French Sauvignon is grown in the Languedoc region.

## Synonyms

As we have already mentioned, *Fié* or *Fiers* is a synonym of Sauvignon, but the name may vary according to the department in which it is cultivated: *Blanc Fumé*, *Sauvignon Fumé*, *Fumé*, *Savagnou*, *Surin*. The latter was reported in Merlet 1690, 151: *Le Surin est une espece de Melié un peu pointu, d'un excellent goust, fort estimé en Auvergne*.

In Italy its roots are old enough to go by different synonyms: for instance in the province of Reggio Emilia it is called *Spergolina*, or *Pellegrina*, whereas Sémillon is called *Green Spergolina* – this may be another evidence of the fact that both varieties came together from the Bordeaux area where they are both grown. Sauvignonasse is also known in this area, but it goes by the name of *Ochio di Gatto* "cat's eye". Our Slovenian neighbours call it *Muškatni Silvanec*, i.e. a Silvaner "muscat".

## Sauvignon at the antipodes

The reader would expect the Sauvignon to have made a "trip around the world", but suffice it to say that this fine variety has spread in all areas where the climate is fitting for its being grown. It has achieved a very good exploit in the near Austria, especially in Styria, but it has also reached good surface areas in Rumania, Moldavia, in the Krasnodar area (southern Russia), in California, Chile, Argentina, South Africa and Australia... However it was at the



antipodes that this variety experienced a sudden growth: in New Zealand there are 44,479 acres of Sauvignon, planted between the end of the last century and the beginning of this century. Therefore it is a very recent success, but we hope it may go on for many future centuries.

## Conclusion

The history of mankind has got many edges and usually only the most painful events (wars, suicide bombing) are told; if we started to see it from the vines' side, thinking about the nectar they are capable of giving us, we may learn a better concept of mankind and, perhaps, mankind would be better.

## Acknowledgments

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Sauvignon has been grown in New Zealand since 1970s, a century after it was first cultivated in Friuli, but there is a big difference: in Friuli it has always been marginal for winemaking, relegated in small production of high quality, and only during the last two decades has it played a supporting role among white wines; in New Zealand it has been a real boom, being the most cultivated grape in the country. The picture shows a stamp from New Zealand celebrating the "discovery" of New Zealand and its hundredth anniversary (1840-1940): thirty years had to pass before New Zealanders got the Sauvignon "disease".

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# Sauvignon Blanc in Friuli Venezia Giulia

A strong identity, although still a "work in progress"

# T

There is no doubt that Sauvignon Blanc has become the most important traditional white grape variety from which wine is made in Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG) today.

Clearly, I point out to readers that my use of the word "traditional" in this context is specific and exact: as documented brilliantly by Enos Costantini in this same publication, Sauvignon Blanc has graced FVG soils for at least 160 years, thereby making it a traditional cultivar of FVG, and not an international or recently planted one.

Notwithstanding the fact that for any Friulian citizen a glass of sauvignon is about as traditional as it gets, this "international-traditional" distinction is not at all a moot one, but bears enormous importance when tasting Friuli Venezia Giulia's many different Sauvignon Blanc wines.



## The "Friuliness"

Clearly, there is very much a FVG "style" of Sauvignon Blanc, which may be summarized as being weightier than Sancerre (Loire) but less aromatically pungent than New Zealand's. In fact, Lamberto Frescobaldi of the famous Tuscan estate of the same name and now owner of the FVG estate Attems, likes to say that FVG Sauvignon Blanc wines are absolutely unique due to their combination of perfume, structure and minerality. In fact, the region's Sauvignon Blanc wines fall somewhere in between the two recognized French-New Zealand icons for this wine, and it behooves FVG producers and governing forces to broadcast this fact as much as possible. In other words, there is a "Friuliness" to Sauvignon Blanc that has not come to be for FVG's Chardonnay wines (I would submit that FVG's Pinot Bianco also has a somewhere typical to the region that ought to be evidenced much further by all involved). This specific somewhere is an increasingly important card to play for the region on world markets everywhere.

Clearly, over the centuries, Sauvignon Blanc has adapted remarkably well to FVG climate and soils, and the wine is remarkably successful. Even more interesting is that, within a definitely recognizable "Friuli-style" of Sauvignon Blanc, there are however differences between FVG's many Sauvignon Blanc wines that I find fascinating. These diversities are essentially due to three main

factors: specific grape variety used, differences in terroir, and winemaking choices, that I shall analyze here. This all makes for fascinating possibilities in the realm of present and future winemaking with the Sauvignon Blanc grape variety in FVG, something that we are already witnessing.

## Biotypes and clones

The specific biotypes and clones of Sauvignon Blanc growing in FVG are of remarkable importance, and I dare say characterize the final wines more so than with almost any other cultivar planted in FVG today. Sauvignon Blanc grapevines differ mainly because of morphological aspects (especially the size of the bunch and of the grapes) and of organoleptic qualities of the final wines (some are more vegetal and pungent than others, such as Rauscedo's R3 clone, or rather biotype). Old and new vineyards planted to Sauvignon Blanc in FVG are made up of very different grapevines, something apparent to anybody bothering to take a walk through the vineyards. Hence, it follows that even wine made in exactly the same manner from grapes grown a short distance away from each other risk being very different as well. FVG's main Sauvignon Blanc is the R3, originally selected by Rauscedo in 1969 from an old vineyard in the Friuli Grave area of the region. So though referred to as a clone, this is not exact, as it was born from a massal selection and then cloned. Undoubtedly a high quality Sauvignon Blanc,

much like France's qualitative ENTAV108 clone, both have been planted all over the world and are now the most commonly grown Sauvignon Blancs. The R3 is characterized by very high vigour but low productivity, and has very small bunches. It is a member of the "green" sub-family of Sauvignon Blancs with wines exuding intense aromas and flavours of green fig, passion fruit, sage and rosemary, as opposed to the richer, deeper, rounder aromas and flavours exhibited by wines made with the "French" sub-family of Sauvignon Blanc (such as the VCR 236 and 237 clones). There are however many other interesting clones available, such as the VCR 195, VCR191 and ISV F 5 or the French clone 530, and numerous potentially great massal selections such as those called Runc, Antenna, GN, and G1. However as many of the vineyards planted with these are still young (still less than 10 or 15 years of age), the jury is out as to what the wines will be really like.

## The health status

Putting terroir and winemaking issues aside for a moment, health status of the grapevines will also contribute to determining a wine's organoleptic profile. In this light, it is interesting to know that the health status of Sauvignon Blanc grapevines in FVG has been analyzed in two successive stages over the last forty years. First in the 1960s, and again in the 1990s, but only in these latter years were modern identification tech-



nologies such as ELISA and PCR tests used. By using these more precise, up-to-date techniques, it was discovered that many FVG Sauvignon Blanc grapevines long held to be both viticulturally and enologically interesting were in fact virus-affected (as is quite often the case, in fact), but did not pass modern-day health status standards. In fact, of 866 Sauvignon Blanc biotypes studied from all over the region, only a few were deemed virus-free, with only six passing the Elisa test and four the PCR test. Of these, only VCR 328 (the “Czech” clone of Sauvignon Blanc, but in fact very similar in its organoleptic profile to R3) has now been officially accepted for planting, and VCR 236 and 237 (native of the Ippolis of Premariacco area of FVG) ought to be approved shortly (while VCR 389 is still under study). Clearly

the same technology is now being applied to many of the R3 grapevines planted all over the region in order to verify their viral status as well and those studies are under way.

### **An aromatic perspective**

From an aromatic perspective, these different clones yield very different results. For example, and not surprisingly, it is the R3 and ENTAV108 clones, not by chance viewed as the two most successful, that express the highest concentrations of terpens in general, but there are noteworthy differences between the many Sauvignon Blanc clones in the kind of terpens, such as linalool and geraniol, expressed. So while average terpen concentrations expressed by most Sauvignon Blanc clones range between 60-70 µg/L, R3 and

ENTAV 108 express 91 and 121 µg/L respectively. However, while R3 and ENTAV 108 express the largest amounts of linalool (and hence wines redolent in aromas and flavours of musk, balsamic herbs, lavender and bergamot), geraniol (rose) concentrations are highest in wines made with VCR236, 237 and 328. On the other hand, citronellol (aromas and flavours of geranium and rose) concentrations are higher in wines made with VCR237 and ENTAV 108. Clearly, these aroma molecules can exist in both free and conjugated (glycosylated) forms, leading to wines that are meant for earlier drinking (those especially rich in free compounds) and those that are more ageworthy (those richer in glycosylated molecules). A good winemaker knows how to pull out of each grapevine he works with what each can actually give. In fact, while winemaking has always been extremely important in the world of wine (let's remember that a grape's natural tendency when left on its own is not to make wine, but vinegar) it has become even more so in the last ten years. This is because of a better understanding of how to go about saving, or even amplifying the aroma molecules just discussed. Clearly, the importance of thiols, sulfur-containing molecules, has only recently been appreciated but their relevance is paramount to Sauvignon Blanc wines. These molecules, though they need oxygen for activation, will be burned off



extremely quickly in oxidative, high temperature environments. Therefore, picking grapes at optimal maturity is absolutely key in making Sauvignon Blanc wines that are aromatically pungent and intense. Overripeness means not just a loss of water by the grapes, but the increased permeability of the skins subjected to longtime heat and wind also allows oxygen inside the berry, thereby permitting the oxidation of the aromas and flavor molecules contained within. Grapes that have lost their permeability are the site of formation of substances leading to different aromas and flavours that are then going to be found in wines but that are neither typical of that variety nor of the terroir it is grown in. For example, white wines made in this manner are

rich in sotolone (a molecule reminiscent of curry and resin, aromas and flavours now found in white wines made all over the world regardless of place or cultivar) just as red wines are rich in methyl-nonadienone (aromas and flavours of ripe plum even prune).

These compounds are now found in wines made from superripe grapes and they completely subvert the idea of true cultivar and terroir expression. In fact, only recently, with the establishment of hyper-reductive winemaking techniques in the cellar, has the importance of thiol preservation become apparent to all, leading to Sauvignon Blanc wines that are fresher, more aromatically interesting and complex (and not just in FVG).

### **A work in progress**

All of the above helps understand the many different Sauvignon Blanc wines possible in FVG (or anywhere else, for that matter). In fact, for Giorgio Badin, owner of the Ronco del Gelso estate in the Isonzo DOC and one of FVG's and Italy's best white wine producers, Sauvignon Blanc wines are still very much a "work in progress" in the region. He says that: "Currently, we still haven't gotten to a definitive FVG-style of Sauvignon Blanc, though there is certainly a discernible style evident throughout the region's wines. However, today it is still a matter of not just one FVG Sauvignon Blanc, but rather the Sauvignon of Vie di Romans versus the Sauvignon of Villa Russiz or that of Volpe Pasini, which are wines that express producer philosophies more than those of the terroir or the region. Just like you say, there are those amongst us who don't mind a little oxygen contact with the must, and those who avoid it altogether; there are those who harvest very early, and those who harvest late, and all this leads to quite different wines". But Badin is also quick to point out the positive aspect about all of this: "Clearly, it means that Sauvignon Blanc has adapted very well to our region and that it can give many different very worthwhile wines as a result of this adaptation to our soils and microclimates. Furthermore, on average, FVG is blessed with a climate warm enough for grapes to ripen fully, so it is rare to taste FVG Sauvignon Blanc wines that reek

of green bell pepper, artichoke or asparagus”. Gianfranco Gallo of the prestigious Vie di Romans estate has a similar view. “Sauvignon Blanc has very high phenotypic variability, and expression of its genetic potential will be heavily influenced by microclimate and cultivation techniques.

But I also agree that climate is a very important factor. In the Loire, situated at roughly 50° latitude N, the fresh continental climate means grapes that have trouble reaching optimal ripeness, so pyrazinic green bell pepper notes are common in the wines made there, while this rarely happens in well made FVG Sauvignon Blanc wines. It's not that one is better than the other, but they are certainly going to be very different wines.

In New Zealand, for example, even though the Marlborough area is located at similar latitude as FVG (46° S), the oceanic climate allows for cultivation of Sauvignon Blanc on very fertile soils rich in organic matter, in relatively cool environments with low rainfall activity. The resulting wines are very aromatically intense, even savage (a term that harkens back to the grape's name, deriving from the French word “sauvage”).

In FVG, though we are situated in a northern position, the co-existence of two climatic areas, the Mediterranean and the sub-alpine continental, allows for the variety to produce aromas and flavours typical of both the Loire and New Zealand, a huge bonus for us. And all FVG producers should avoid to



copy the Sauvignon Blanc wines of other regions, for ours is very much unique and typical of its specific area”.

### **So many terroirs**

Therefore, not just specific Sauvignon Blanc biotypes or clones and winemaking techniques utilized are important, but terroir is too, as always. Soils allowing for easy water stress or thick clay alluvial flatland soils are not ideal, for example. But it's a lot more complicated than that, for in the Isonzo DOC alone there are at least four main different soil types and two different microclimates. Gravel and some clay are necessary to allow for structure and minerality in the wines. Things can be taken to a whole other level as well: Gianpaolo Venica of the famous Venica&Venica estate likes to point out that there are something like 50 different microclimates

in the Collio DOC area, and his vineyards are located in a much cooler area than those located in Buttrio or Capriva for example, so the ensuing wines will be very different. Venica also believes the nearby Adriatic sea plays an important role, as he finds noteworthy saline notes in FVG Sauvignon Blancs that are not always found elsewhere.

### **A definite regional identity**

In ultimate analysis it should appear clear to all that while FVG's Sauvignon Blancs may still be a work in progress, there is a definite regional identity to them all and that the wines have proven amazingly successful and popular to date. It is likely we will hear a great deal more about FVG Sauvignon Blanc as vineyards age and winemaking techniques become more uniform throughout the region.



Vineyards in Montsclapade, in the municipality of Premariacco.

Ian D'AGATA

# The Grape Varieties and Wines of Friuli Venezia Giulia

I have long been in love with Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG). Friulian by way of mother, I spent the summers of my youth walking the *ponca*, that marly-arenaceous soil that characterizes the Friuli Colli Orientali DOC around Udine and the Collio DOC around Gorizia. The scenery is wonderful, with oak forests, babbling brooks, and lots of wildlife everywhere, and plenty of delightful architecture and history going back to ancient Roman times. After all, Cividale, one of the prettiest towns in all of FVG, was founded as *Forum Julii* by none other than Julius Caesar himself.

However, where FVG does locals and visitors the greatest service is in the realm of food and wine lovers. The delicious regional cuisine is brimming with dishes (*frico*, *ejalsons*, *potizza*, *gubana*, and many others) you won't find anywhere else in Italy, and the wines deservedly enjoy a reputation as some of Italy's best. In fact, relative to native wine grapes, there is no region in Italy that can claim more different grape varieties than FVG. True, Campania, Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta are also especially rich in native cultivars (cultivars are cultivated wine grapes, different

from grapes that grow wild), but only Piedmont makes as many different wines from native grapes in commercially significant numbers as does FVG. Wine lovers everywhere can look with confidence to FVG for a bevy of great wines to choose from, white or red, dry or sweet, sparkling or still; in fact, FVG truly offers a wine for every palate. The following review summarizes FVG's most famous and abundant grape varieties, as well as less well known ones, but for all of which there is at least one monovarietal bottling commercially available for sale.

# Friuli Venezia Giulia's most common grape varieties and wines

## MALVASIA ISTRIANA

### *A grape and wine in any port*

There can be no doubt that of Italy's seventeen, mostly unrelated *Malvasia* varieties, the best one with which to make dry white wines is FVG's Malvasia Istriana (or Malvasia Friulana). In the region it is used to make a wine generically labeled malvasia, with the DOC name attached; therefore, you'll find Carso Malvasia, Collio Malvasia, Isonzo Malvasia and so forth. Like all *Malvasias* and their wines, it has a long and distinguished history: just like with Ribolla Gialla, the wine was so famous that everybody wanted to plant a *Malvasia* variety and everyone wanted their wine to be made with a *Malvasia*. And just like with the *Grecos*, more often than not there was no Malvasia at all either in the vineyards or the wines. The grapevines are different from other *Malvasias* grown in Italy, and actually they can look different within FVG as well. Some Malvasia Istriana I have seen over the years are characterized by very compact and very large bunches, with wings and without, but there are also loosely-packed ones too. They all have very

well developed stalks and rather large berries. The best soils are rocky, clay and nutrient-poor, and the choice of rootstock is of paramount importance. While less vigorous ones might be intuitively be the ones to pick, in reality mid-vigorous rootstocks are better able to handle conditions of water stress in gravelly terrains, especially in warm vintages. Considering that much Malvasia Istriana is planted on the Isonzo's gravel terrains, that is something worth keeping in mind. Clay-rich soils are too water retentive, and as the variety does poorly in excessively humid soils, these are best avoided. Fertile, rich soils also are not ideal, as resulting wines tend to be neutral and low in acidity.

### The wine

Wines made from Malvasia Istriana in FVG can be very different. While some are neutral and very mineral, others are incredibly aromatic, not unlike a dry Moscato Bianco (White Muscat). Carso Malvasia wines are especially famous for their intense minerality and austere mouthfeels, but many others display rich mouthfeels and intensely aromatic notes. These different organoleptic profiles



Bunch of grapes of Malvasia Istriana (or Malvasia Friulana). Photograph by Claudio Mattaloni.

derive from the cultivation technique, soil fertility, pruning methods, and harvest timing, though the single most important aspect is the generosity of yields; unless yields are kept low, the aromatic nature of Malvasia Istriana is lost in the wines. Admittedly, there also exist in FVG different biotypes of Malvasia Istriana which can account for part of the differences found in the finished wines. Which is a shame, for Malvasia Istriana is especially rich in aromatic molecules such as norisoprenoids, which over the course of the years bring to the fore aromas of apricot, peach and wisteria; with more aging still (wines can easily last and improve for eight to ten years), dihydronaphthalene becomes more apparent, the typical diesel fuel characteristic of Riesling wines.

**MALVASIA ISTRIANA  
(OR MALVASIA FRIULANA)**

Cluster. Size: medium; shape: cylindrical, with one very small wing, sparse. Berry. Size: medium; shape: round; skin: thin but resistant, yellow-green. Harvest: medium-early.

Clones: ISV Conegliano 1, ISV-F6, VCR 4, ERSA FVG 120, ERSA FVG 121, VCR 113, VCR 114, VCR 115, ERSA FVG 122, ERSA FVG 123, 2007 ISV-VA 101. Clones VCR4, 120, 121 and 115 appear to be particularly successful (they offer the best balance between vigour and aromatic personality).

Specific characteristics/requirements: generally speaking a regular, high yielding variety, it prefers compact poor soils, and is disease-resistant (perhaps only oidium can prove a problem).

**PICOLIT*****The ugly duckling is very much a swan***

Is Picolit Italy's greatest wine? Luigi Veronelli, Italy's most famous wine writer ever certainly believed so. It is also my favourite Italian grape of all. Historically, it was common only in FVG's Friuli Colli Orientali (despite what people might think and wine writers report today, it was not at all typical of the Collio or Friuli Grave, for example), though in decades past small lots were made in regions as far away as Veneto, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany. One of Italy's oldest native varieties, though official documentation of it dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century only, it is also one of the very few Italian grapes and wines with a noble history. In fact, Picolit's golden, sweet wine was a long a fixture in the royal courts of Europe, praised as much as Château d'Yquem or Hungary's famous Tokaji Es-



Bunch of grapes of Picolit. Illustration from *Pomona italiana ossia Trattato degli alberi fruttiferi* by Giorgio Gallesio, 1839.

sencia. Most important, because of the very fact that Picolit has graced FVG soil for centuries, it is also one of the very few Italian cultivars closely associated with specific high quality viticultural areas, something that modern day DOCG legislature has unfortunately failed to recognize. And though it pains me to say so, it is extremely sad that the great grand crus for Picolit, Cialla, Rocca Bernarda, Rosazzo, and Savorgnano are not recognized officially (Cialla is the lone exception) on labels nowadays. It's a huge missed opportunity: sort of like owning vines in Musigny or Bernkastel's Doctor vineyard and not being able to write it on the label.

Picolit's name derives from Friulian *picolit* 'small stalk', while time ago it was thought that it came from Italian adjective *piccolo*, 'small'. In fact, Picolit's grape cluster is not just small, but scrawny, with very few berries (a normal grape bunch has 100-200 berries, while Picolit normally has fifteen or less). The scrawny

bunch is due to floral abortion, or partial sterility of the male pollen; the gynoidal flowers lead to unreliable fruit set and hence carry only a few berries as a result.

This characteristic of the variety is an important one, as it caused cultivation of Picolit to decline greatly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to the difficulties in producing any commercially sensible quantity of wine.

Actually, Picolit presents a great deal of intravarietal variability, a condition that won't surprise those who realize it's an extremely ancient variety. Consequently, it's likely that Picolit has built up many mutations over the centuries, explaining different phenotypes. Besides modern clones that have further muddled the picture (some *Picolits* now have atypically large bunches and plenty of berries and in my view, shouldn't really be allowed to be called Picolit at all) there are *Picolits* with a green stalk and bright yellow berries, others with a red stalk and smaller berries, and others still that have an even darker, blood red stalk as described by Pietro di Maniago already back in 1823 (Andrea Feluga of the famous Livio Felluga winery believes the best of these to be the red stalked biotype). The two people who have done most for Picolit and its wines throughout the centuries were two noblemen, in fact both Counts, Count Fabio Asquini and Count Gaetano Perusini. The former brought Picolit great fame and attention all over Europe,



Rocca Bernarda estate. Here Giacomo Perusini, at the beginning of the 1900s brought back Picolit just as it was disappearing. His son Gaetano promoted various experimentations on this variety and kept up its prestige. Photograph by Stefano Zanini.

bottling his wines in hand-blown Murano glass bottles, while the latter successfully brought Picolit back to life in the 1950s, at a time when interest in a scrawny, poorly productive variety was of no interest to anyone. Perusini actively selected and planted the healthiest looking 'Picolit' vines he could find in the hillside vineyards of his family's Rocca Bernarda castle.

### The wine

Picolit is the ultimate "ugly duckling" grape that once turned into wine, will fly like a swan; in fact, it's potentially one of the world's best sweet wines. Potentially, because much Picolit wine was and is not as good as it should be. The end result being that consumers lost interest in a wine that wasn't/isn't worth the high prices asked for it. Today it is made especially via air-drying, which means Picolit wines are very rich and

mouthcoating, though some wines of decades past, made by late harvesting the grapes left on the vines by producers brave enough to confront FVG's fickle (and rainy)

autumn weather, were also magnificent. Unfortunately, for the reasons discussed above, there just can't be much Picolit wine available: even the region's biggest producer, La Roncaia, rarely exceeds 6,000 three hundred and seventy-five mL bottles a year, and most produce rarely make over 1,000 half bottles a year. So it's still very hard, for foreigners especially, to drink a Picolit showing what the variety and wine are capable of. Last but not least, ill-advised but well meaning legislature has decreed that DOCG Picolit can be made by using only a minimum 80% Picolit, not at all a good idea because buying a Picolit wine that smells or tastes of Sauvignon Blanc is completely pointless. Instead, a good Picolit is characterized by a refinement and grace that is uncommon in most sweet wines; not just sweet and velvety, but showcasing an amazing lightness of being with delicious acacia honey, ripe tropical fruit, fresh citrus and white flower aromas and flavours. It doesn't age especially well, but why defer gratification?

### PICOLIT

Grape/wine colour: white.

Cluster. Size: very small; shape: conical-cylindrical, usually winged, extremely sparse.

Berry. Size: very small; shape: spheroidal; skin: very thin, bright yellow-gold (you can see the pips through the translucent skin).

Clones: ISV Conegliano 1, ISV-F4, ISV-F6.

Harvest: late September/early October.

Specific requirements/characteristics: needs good, warmer exposures; its scrawny bunch allows air drying directly on the vine, provided rain is not a problem. The variety is characterized by strong vigour, but unfortunately it pushes growth of the shoots rather than grape production, which is extremely low, and can be plagued by low acidity levels.

### PICULIT NERI

#### *Not your usual Picolit*

Piculit Neri is a lovely if confusing little grape. It is not related to Picolit: the two are not mutations or biotypes. It is also not the same variety as Refosco Gentile or Refosco di Rauscedo, as once believed. Nowadays most experts agree that it is a closer relative of Refosco Nostrano, perhaps even a biotype, but in my opinion, the two grapevines look completely different and the wines couldn't be farther removed from each other as well. We don't have much historical information on Piculit Neri. Apparently, it was on display at the grapevine fairs organized by the *Friulian Agrarian Association* of Udine in 1863 and 1921 and considered typical of the area around Castelnuovo, and was also cited in Pirona's "Vocabulary of



### PICULIT NERI

Grape/wine colour: red.

Cluster. Size: small; shape: cylindrical-conical, compact, with one small wing.

Berry. Size: medium-small; shape: round; skin: thick, blue-black, with little bloom.

Harvest: late September/early October.

Specific requirements/characteristics: vigorous; good resistance to most diseases except grey rot, despite its relatively thick skins.

Bunches of grapes of Piculit Neri ready for harvesting.

the Friuli Language" (*Vocabolario friulano*) of 1871 and 1935. Historically, it was grown mainly on the right bank of the Tagliamento river around the town of San Vito and as far as Schio (near Vicenza) in Veneto. A vigorous variety, farmers apparently appreciated its dependable, abundant production and generalized disease resistance.

### The wine

Piculit Neri wines were always much sought after due to their finesse. In fact, the wine can be excellent, and in my experience considerably better than many other made with native FVG red grapes, if for no other reason because of much more refined tannins. The aromas and flavours are mainly those of underbrush, red currant and chestnuts, with sweet spice notes. We would not have Piculit Neri to talk about today if it weren't for the passion and dedication of Emilio Bulfon, a producer who, to his everlasting credit, resurrected many local FVG natives from oblivion.

### PIGNOLO Abbey road

It is thanks to the Abbazia di Rosazzo, or Abbey of Rosazzo, that we can still speak of Pignolo and its wines today. An abbey vineyard worker named Casasola selected the grapevines that looked different from all others, and that made a very good wine; he therefore avoided Pignolo becoming extinct. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most experts recommended against Pignolo's cultivation (though Poggi praised the variety in 1939) because of the extremely tightly packed grape bunch that acts essentially as a rot magnet in years of poor weather (Pignolo's name derives from its very small and compact bunch, reminiscent of a pine cone or *pigna*, in Italian). Add to that tannins of uncommon brutality (indeed, Pignolo wines are some of the most tannic in all Italy) and you understand why people couldn't be bothered. However, in earlier times Pignolo was very highly thought of: official documents of the city of Udine



The Pignolo variety always has an indented leaf. The three biotypes that stand out within the variety differ in the size of the leaf and for vigour. This painting by Tiburzio Donadon accompanies Guido Poggi's *Atlante ampelografico* published in 1939.

show that the wine was used as a welcoming gift for visiting notables as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century dithyramb *Bacco in Friuli*, Pignolo was especially singled out for the quality of its wines, and modern day experts such as Dalmasso also believed it to be a high quality grapevine. There are apparently three different biotypes of this cultivar: one with a heavily indented leaf (not very productive), one with a lobed leaf, and one with a leaf that shows a degree of indentation in between that of the previous two and is slightly more productive. All three need relatively warm weather to ripen completely, and all are best planted on the top part of hills where ventilation makes grey rot less of a problem.

### The wine

Pignolo has lived a remarkable turnaround, and from the 1950s when it was virtually *desaparecido*, it is now grown in many parts

of FVG. However, it is still most abundant around the towns of Albana, Premariacco, Prepotto and Rosazzo in the Friuli Colli Orientali. It is not an especially easy variety to work with due to its wealth of polyphenols, as the high osmotic pressure of the must creates a very unfriendly environment for yeasts, and so stuck fermentations are not unheard of with Pignolo. Pignolo is considered to be one of FVG's red grapes with the best potential, though I wonder if that isn't due just to the fact it can give wines of great structure, that are, by definition, always considered to be "important". In my experience, it takes many years for Pignolo wines to smoothen out (at least eight or nine years in truly monovariety examples) and to showcase delicious blackberry and blueberry aromas and flavours, and a very noteworthy mineral edge. For these reasons, some producers have taken to air-drying the grapes, in an effort to obtain fleshier, rounder wines. One wonders if others don't cut it with hefty doses of smoother Merlot wine, though nobody seems to do so, if you listen to producers.

### PIGNOLO

Bunch. Size: small; shape: cylindrical, compact.

Berry. Size: medium-small; shape: round; skin: thick, blue-black.

Harvest: late September/early October.

Specific requirements/characteristics: very sensitive to oidium; in really old vineyards the vines are ungrafted, a rarity, for Pignolo is very sensitive to phylloxera.



Bunches of grapes of Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso.



Stem of a leaf of Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso.

### REFOSCO DAL PEDUNCOLO ROSSO *Old reliable*

The very red stalk (once the grapes are fully ripe) gives this variety its name. Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso is FVG's best known red grape, first called so in 1877, to differentiate it from the many other Refosco varieties that were also grown in the region throughout the centuries. It was always held in high esteem by local growers and winelovers because the wines are were good (already in 1939 Poggi had written that this *Refosco* variety was the one worth concentrating efforts on thanks to the superior quality of wine it produced), and because it tends to ripen one to two weeks earlier than other red grapes of FVG.

Recent genetic data has revealed that Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso is related to other varieties such as Corvina, Primitivo and Montepulciano, while Piculit Neri, a variety once believed to be closely related to it as well, is now felt to

be related to Refosco Nostrano. By far the best summary available anywhere on this variety is by Claudio Fabbro who wrote a magnificent scholarly work in 2005 on the *Refoscicos* and the history of the Friuli viticulture.

Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso does well in most soil type but prefers nutrient poor, calcareous-clay soils and hillside locations. The later are all important because otherwise the variety's very vigorous nature takes over and vines are thin, dilute and green. And Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso really does need to ripen fully well in order to avoid vegetal aromas and flavours that you'd typically associate with the *Cabernets*.

### The wine

Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso is most common in FVG, though it also grows in Veneto. The best wines to try are those of the DOC Friuli Colli Orientali del Friuli, though there are increasingly noteworthy wines being made in



Scodovacca "the Territory of Refosco". The soil and the climate of Scodovacca, a village in the municipality of Cervignano, make it possible for the Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso to express all its organoleptic potentialities.

Friuli Grave, Friuli Annia, Friuli Isonzo and Friuli Latisana. Some of the western DOC areas of FVG can be a little too cold and rainy in some years for Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso to ripen fully, so know your vintages. Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso makes the most complex of all *Refosco* varieties: black cherries, dried red cherries, fresh herbs and flowers (lavender, geranium, violet) are commonly found in every glass of well made Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso wine. Well made is the key word here, as Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso is a reductive variety and working with stainless steel can be a problem, unless air contact is allowed in the immediate post-fermentation phase, for otherwise off-odours will develop easily. For this reason, many estates prefer to use small oak barrels in the vinification process.

### REFOSCO DAL PEDUNCOLO ROSSO

Cluster. Size: medium-large; shape: pyramidal, one very small wing, sparse.

Berry. Size-medium; shape: spheroidal-oval; skin: thin but resistant, very dark blue.

Harvest: medium-late.

Clones: ISV-F1, ISV-F4 Toppani (one of the most planted for its wines are more complex and age best; less vigorous), VCR 14 (the least sensitive to Botrytis), ERSA FVG 400 (slightly less productive than the rest; complex wines), ERSA FVG 401 Villa Chiozza (wines with more floral notes), ERSA FVG 402, ERSA FVG 403, VCR 473, ERSA FVG 404, ERSA FVG 405.

Specific requirements/characteristics: drought and cold weather resistant, but susceptible to peronospora; low fertility of the basal buds.



Bunch of grapes of Refosco Nostrano.

### REFOSCO NOSTRANO

Long confused with Refoscone, in the not too distant past ampelographers such as Poggi and Marzotto thought the two varieties identical, but we know today that two are completely different varieties. In fact, there are numerous FVG producers today who consider the two identical even to this day, but this is incorrect. Refosco Nostrano is grown all over Friuli, but especially in the province of Udine, near the town of Faedis and understandably, local growers would much prefer to call the grapevine and wine Refosco di Faedis. The variety prefers dry clay-alluvial sites, but suffers water stress easily.

#### The wine

Refosco Nostrano wines have rebounded back with a vengeance thanks to the association of

Refosco di Faedis growers. There are roughly 25 estates involved in the association (there's only about 30 producers in all making wine from this grape) and they have agreed to general guidelines by which to make the wine so as to avoid the problems that have plagued more famous wines such as Chianti or *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano* (where it seems almost every grape variety has been allowed into the blend so that wines are completely different and don't resemble each other at all, generating only confusion and disaffection in the wine loving public). The estates have even agreed on the same label, with the name of the estate written in freehand on the front label and admittedly, far more legibly on the back label. Wines made with Refosco Nostrano don't have the complexity of those made with Refosco del Peduncolo

Rosso, but have finer tannins and are usually devoid of the intensely green and vegetable notes of wines made with unripe Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso, so that's a real plus. The wine has lovely notes of blueberry, sweet dark plums and violet. I think there's a huge future for Refosco Nostrano and its producers, who unlike many in Italy, show signs of being able to work together; the road won't be an easy or a short one, but the future is in their favour.

#### REFOSCO NOSTRANO

Cluster. Size: large; shape: pyramidal, long, sometimes winged, midcompact.

Berry. Size: medium-large; shape: spheroidal; skin: thick, blue-black. Harvest: mid-October.

Clones: VCR 5, VCR 470, VCR 471, VCR 472.

Specific requirements/characteristics: resistant to diseases; abundant and dependable producer.

## RIBOLLA GIALLA

### *The wine of summer*

Ribolla Gialla is potentially one of Italy's best white wines, but the problem is it has become the darling of experimentally minded producers bent on turning into something it doesn't necessarily have to be. Today, just about every imaginable type of wine can and is made from Ribolla Gialla: white, orange, dry, sweet, sparkling. In my view the grape shows best when it is used to make a delightfully light white wine of sneaky concentration, with white floral and citrus aromas and flavours; a really good Ribolla Gialla wine will also carry a delicate note of white pepper.



Bunches of grapes of Ribolla Gialla against the sun setting on the Collio.

Unfortunately, given the cultivar's mind-bending acidity levels, the variety is also used today to make large volumes of a simple sparkler meant to duke it out with Prosecco (rather successfully I may add), while others have turned it into the "orangest" of Italian orange wines. The latter wines made by long skin contact and even aging in terracotta amphoras, are the new darlings of the wine press (always looking for the latest fad to write about) but the truth is that the majority of people I talk to and go out to dinner with want their white wines to be white, and have very little patience or interest in white wines that behave as red wines.

In Italy, Ribolla Gialla grows only in FVG, and even in this region it is limited essentially to two DOC areas, the Friuli Colli Orientali and the Collio. Grown in flatland vineyards, it can produce huge volumes of mainly high-acid, neutral grapes giving watery and insipid wines. Instead, when grown on more or

less steep, low yielding hillside vineyards, a dry white wine can be made that is light and lively and a joy to drink.

Ribolla Gialla (or yellow Ribolla) is so-called because there also exists a Ribolla Verde, less qualitative and less common in Italy (Di Rovasenda also mentioned a Ribolla Bianca, but this was most likely another, unrelated variety, also mentioned by Zava in 1901). Ribolla Gialla has always been believed to be an extremely ancient cultivar grown in FVG and native to the hills of Gorizia, but also common in nearby Slovenia's Goriška Brda, but it is most likely people have always confused the wine named "Ribolla" with the grape variety. In fact, there is no official documentation anywhere of a Ribolla Gialla or Verde grapevine anywhere in medieval times. The first mention of Ribolla Gialla was probably Pietro de Maniago's in his 1823 catalogue, in which he also described, albeit briefly, Ribolla Verde. In past centuries, "ribolla" was a name most often used to describe a wine that was very prestigious and costly (for example, the governing body of the city of Udine used ribolla as a welcome gift for visiting notables; in 1568 the Duke of Bavaria received "28 bocce di malvasia e 26 bocce di rabiola [i.e. ribolla]."); for this reason, much like with the many unrelated *Grecos* and *Malvasias* of Italy, *Ribolla* varieties and wines sprung up everywhere.

In nearby Slovenia and Croatia, the variety is often called *Rebula*, but this is an incorrect, as there are numerous different *Rebula*

Al Martin di Fuleth p' uno vigno puesto su la mont  
di gaglian pagio.  
Ribuello got .7.

Short excerpt of a document dated 1420, written in Friulian, that reports the rents paid to a brotherhood of Cividale del Friuli. The rents were mainly in kind such as cereals and wine. In this case, as you can read on the left, the wine is Ribolla (written *Ribuello*) and the quantity due for the rent of a vineyard on the hill of Gagliano (*uno vigno puesto su la mont di gaglian*) was of almost eighty litres.

varieties and *Rebula* biotypes and clearly not all are identical to Ribolla Gialla (for example, *Rebula*, *Rebula Briška* and *Rebula-Old* are homonyms, not synonyms), though Ribolla Gialla and *Rebula Briška* are certainly very closely related.

### The wine

Ribolla Gialla is typical of FVG, and the best and easiest to find are those labelled Friuli Colli Orientali Ribolla or Collio Ribolla, which are also the only two DOCs of monovarietal Ribolla. Just like with Picolit, it is not surprising that an ancient and famous wine such as *ribiolla*/Ribolla would closely be associated with specific *crus*.

This is an important and unique feature of Ribolla (and Picolit) wines, and not at all common, for example, of some of Italy's most famous wines such as Brunello di Montalcino or Amarone della Valpolicella, in which specific vineyard sites become renowned only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In my view, the two best sites, or true *grand crus*, for Ribolla Gialla wines are Rosazzo in the Colli Orientali and Oslavia in the Collio. Ribolla from Rosazzo, a warm microclimate, has a slightly fuller body and greater concentration than most (though rich is a relative term, as Ribolla wine is always a fresh, fragrant white wine), while Ribolla from Oslavia, where vine-

yards are located at higher altitudes and in a cooler microclimate, are mineral, lemony and higher acid. Ribolla Gialla wines will always be best when made from grapes grown in poorly fertile soils and rich in mineral salts, such as the areas around Buttrio, Rocca Bernarda, Spessa, Dolegna del Collio and San Floriano (near Oslavia).

In my opinion, Ribolla is one of Italy's greatest light-bodied white wines, and one of the greatest summertime wines around, but the variety's versatility and generosity are such that far too many different wines, of greatly varied quality levels, are made with it.

But when made from grapes grown in hillside vineyards and low yields, with low fermentation temperatures and avoiding all oak (too dominant for a delicate grape and wine), it is a memorable wine perfect for summertime sipping.

### RIBOLLA GIALLA

Bunch. Size: medium; shape: cylindrical-pyramidal, medium-compact. Berry. Size: medium-large; shape: round, slightly flattened at the sides; skin: thin, pale yellow-green. Harvest: medium.

Specific requirements/characteristics: it tends to do poorly in flatland vineyards, where it becomes overproductive and yields neutral, insipid wines. The best soils are those with a low clay percentage and that are well draining as this will contribute to diminishing the cultivar's naturally high vigour.

### SCHIOPPETTINO

#### An explosively great red wine

During my university years, I fell in love with this wine and began buying and collecting *Schioppettinos* from every producer and every vintage (there wasn't much Schioppettino being made then, so my university student budget allowed me to do so), and regularly visited producers.

Consequently, I have built up a significant experience with both variety and wine, and still today Schioppettino is one of my favourite red wines of all. And when the Association of Schioppettino Producers of Prepotto asked me to lead and moderate the first ever conference dedicated to the variety and guide two never before organized vertical tastings, my love for Schioppettino and its wines had come full circle.

Believe it or not, as recently as 1976, Schioppettino was an outlawed variety, but the inhabitants of the town of Prepotto (along with Albana and Cialla, one of the three grand crus for the variety) rebelled *en masse* and in 1978 got Schioppettino legal again. In fact, Schioppettino has always thrived in FVG's Colli Orientali (where it is also called Ribolla Nera or, rarely, Pokalca, to be read Pokalza, the variety's Slovenian name), but for which there is little historical documentation. Di Rovasenda quotes a Ribolla Nera from Udine in 1877, and on *Guida delle Prealpi Giulie*, Julian Prealps Guidebook, 1912 edi-



Bunch of grapes of Schioppettino.

tion, you can read that *Pokalza* was one of the most commonly cultivated varieties in the aftermath of phylloxera. In modern times, it is the Rieppi and the Rapuzzi families that have done most for the grape and wine. The Rieppi family is a centuries old dynasty of Albana, and though the estate no longer exists (it is now run by the talented Lino Casella) its history is closely linked to Schioppettino. In the 1960s and 1970s, Maria Rieppi was considered an excellent winemaker and her wines sought after.

Dina and Paolo Rapuzzi of the Ronchi di Cialla estate single-handedly did more for a DOC than perhaps anybody else in Italy. Recognizing that Cialla has a very unique microclimate (cooler than many other parts of FVG) the Rapuzzi's set out to produce wines from the local native Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso, Picolit, Verduzzo and of course Schioppettino. The Rapuzzi's had faith in monovariety Schioppetti-

no wines, something that hadn't been so apparent prior to their making the wine in commercially viable numbers. They first produced a Schioppettino wine in 1977 and have never looked back; in the process there are countless estates now making a pure Schioppettino wine today, when back in the early 1970s finding one was next to impossible. Schioppettino's name derives from its crunchy berries which literally explode (*scoppiettare*) in the mouth; others believe the explosion was the result of secondary refermentation that routinely took place in the closed bottles due to residual sugar left over in unfiltered wines, causing them to referment, with bottles bursting from carbon dioxide being produced within the closed vessels.

### The wine

Schioppettino is still most common in the Colli Orientali del Friuli, where over 90% of FVGs Schioppettino vines are located. The grand cru area is that of Prepotto and Albana, though in recent years outstanding Schioppettinos have been made near Rosazzo and Premariacco as well. Wines can be extremely elegant and refined, with blackcurrant and black cherry, green peppercorn aromas and flavours, with high acidity and smooth tannins. Unless made from air-dried grapes, it's always a mid-weight wine of uncommon refinement. It ages extremely well and twenty year old, well kept bottles are what memories are made of.

### SCHIOPPETTINO

Bunch. Size: large; shape: cylindrical, elongated, one or two wings, compact.

Berry. Size: quite large, but not uniform; shape: spheroidal, elongated; skin: thick, blue-black. Clones: VCR 412.

Harvest: early October.

Specific requirements/characteristics: not particularly resistant, in rainy, cold springs it suffers from extreme millerandage [i.e. the presence in grape bunches of berries greatly differing in size and, most importantly, maturity] and floral anomalies, so yearly production is anything but dependable or constant.

### TAZZELENQHE

#### *Tongue tied*

Unfortunately, the wonderfully crisp and high acid reds made with Tazzelenghe have fallen out of favour in modern times, as people clamoured for softer, high pH wines with plenty of creamy fruit and ripe flavours. However, the high acid Tazzelenghe makes wines that will match with food much better than many of the red wines of today, that though impressive at a wine tasting, usually fail miserably at the dinner table, where nobody really wants to drink them.

The name *Tazzelenghe* derives from *tazze lenghe*, a term in Friulian meaning “cuts the tongue”, referring to this variety's amazingly high acidity levels and not-shy tannin concentrations (and the high acidity makes those tannins stand out even more).

First documented in 1863 around Udine, Tazzelenghe has always called home the areas around the



### TAZZELENICHE

Bunch. Size: medium; shape: truncated cone, usually winged, sparse.  
Berry. Size: medium-large; shape-spheroidal; skin: blue-purple.  
Harvest: medium: early October.  
Specific requirements/characteristics: extremely resistant to poor climate and diseases; most producers purposely harvest it as late as possible in order to decrease its natural high acidity.

The Tazzelenghe illustrated by Tiburzio Donadon for the *Atlante ampelografico* (Ampleographic Atlas) by Guido Poggi, 1939.

towns of Buttrio and Manzano in FVG's Colli Orientali. Beware that, in the past, Tazzelenghe was mistakenly considered a member of the *Refosco* family, identified with the variety then called *Refosco del Boton*.

### The wine

Tazzelenghe is only grown in FVG, near Buttrio, Manzano, and Cividale near Udine; the only DOC wine is Friuli Colli Orientali Tazzelenghe. When properly made, Tazzelenghe wines are very elegant and age extremely well.

Deep purple, with intense aromas of violets and fresh blackberries, with more blackberry and blackcurrant on the palate with hints of roses, chocolate, underbrush and tar. It's a lovely refined red wine that deserves to be known better.

### TERRANO

#### *Not just a Refosco by any other name*

Though related to Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso and also known as Refosco del Carso and Refosco d'Istria, recent studies have determined Terrano to be a distinct variety from the *Refoscos*. That said, differences between Terrano and Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso are actually fewer and smaller than those between it and other members of the *Refosco* family. In documents from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, *terrano* (from the word *terra* 'land') referred to any wine produced locally, in the *terroir*, whether white or red. These wines received the denomination *terrano* to distinguish them from the more highly-considered, imported wines including Ribolla, Malvasia and other wines which came mainly from Greece, and therefore called *vini navigati*, 'shipped wines'. More recently the term *terrano* has come to refer to the characteristic, typical red wine cultivated on the Carso/Karst, the area that lies beyond



Bunch of grapes of Refosco d'Istria, variety with which the Terrano wine is produced. This painting by Tiburzio Donadon accompanies Guido Poggi's *Atlante ampelografico* published in 1939.

Trieste.

It is also called Cagnina (a name used in Romagna where it also grows, most likely arriving there along with the famous Istria stone used to build many of the palaces and buildings in Ravenna and other cities in Romagna). Other names include Teran and Lambrusco dal Peduncolo Rosso (or Picol Ros), but the last term should not be used since it only generates confusion with the true *Lambruscos*.

The earliest documentation of wine called terrano is found in sales contracts, signed in Gemona in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Similar sales contracts for terrano were increasingly frequent for several hundred years afterwards in Gemona, which was the commercial capital of Friuli at that time, and in other towns in the region. From these documents we understand that the wine referred to as *Terrano* was of inferior value to Ribolla.

For the longest time many believed that Terrano was the variety that the ancient Roman *Pucinum* wine was made with, though I'm not sure how anybody can be absolutely certain of that.

### The wine

Terrano is typical of the Carso area of FVG and the wines are usually labelled as DOC Carso Terrano. In reality, there are two different Carso areas associated with Terrano production: the better known Carso Triestino, narrow and extremely rocky, with iron-rich red soils, and the less well known Carso Goriziano, where the soils are slightly more fertile and less ferrous. In Emilia Romagna it is often called Refosco Terrano and is used to make the DOC wine Cagnina di Romagna (an off-dry, slightly sweet red wine), mainly around Forlì and Ravenna. A good Terrano is purple-ruby, with expressive violet, blackberry and blackcurrant aromas and flavours, with almost painful acidity and strong minerality. It is never an especially fleshy, rich wine, but its very characteristics make it a great food wine.

#### TERRANO

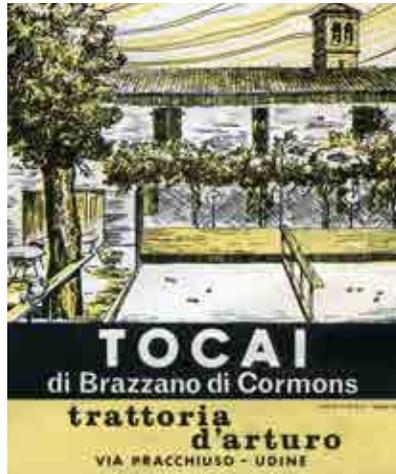
Cluster. Size: large; shape: pyramidal, winged, compact.

Berry. Size: medium; shape: elliptical; skin: thin.

Clones: ISV-F2, ERSA FVG 44, CAB 29, CAB 40.

Harvest: late September.

Specific requirements/characteristics: though it has good resistance to most diseases, it is both drought and wind-sensitive. Adapts well to most soil types but gives the best wines when grown on rocky, very nutrient-poor soils.



### TOCAI FRIULANO *Made in FVG*

Enter any *osteria* or *trattoria* of FVG, ask for the house wine and the *tajut* (the Friulian name for a glass of wine) you are likely to get is one of Friulano (or Ribolla Gialla). Please note that Tocai Friulano is the grape variety, while Friulano is the name of the wine. The wine from FVG can no longer be called Tocai (much as in Alsace there is no more a Tokay-Pinot Gris, but just Pinot Gris), as EU directives allow the “Tokaj” or “Tokay” name only for the Hungarian wine made in the eponymous region. Interestingly, though I don't understand the logic, you can buy Tocai Friulano labelled wines made in New York state and other parts of the world, as long as it's not Europe. In any case, Tocai Friulano has a long and distinguished history in FVG. Tocai Friulano is a very interesting variety with a complicated history here in Italy. We know today that it is identified with Sauvignonasse. Once a common variety in France, it is now found mainly in FVG and in Chile (in fact many very good Chilean wines labelled “Sau-

This label, dating back to the 1950s, accompanied the Tocai sold in a typical *trattoria* in Udine that, as you can see, had a bowls court. The Tocai wine was, and still is, the most popular white wine of Friuli. It is considered to be an excellent aperitif, it goes well with many dishes and it is a ‘conversation’ wine, known to loosen the tongues of the Friulani who are not very loquacious.

vignon” taste just like Friulano, rather than Sauvignon Blanc). There are some plantings of Tocai Friulano in other parts of the world as well, such as New Zealand, and estates are starting to bottle it increasingly with its real variety name (most usually, the chosen name is Sauvignon Vert or Sauvignonasse). In FVG, there appear to be at least two different biotypes of Tocai Friulano, one with very green berries (even when ripe) and a yellow berried one; Carlo Petrusi, FVG's most famous ampelographer has documented the existence of a red stalked biotype of Tocai Friulano as well. The yellow berried biotype is the more common of all nowadays, and clonal selections have been propagated from it (clone R14 is an example). Interestingly most producers I have talked to over the years have told me that it's the green berried biotype that has the more intense aromatics.

### The wine

The wine is produced everywhere in FVG, and even in nearby Vene-

to, where the grape is usually called Tocai Italico. Therefore, Veneto DOC wines such as Piave, Lison-Pramaggiore, Garda and more are also made with Tocai Friulano. In FVG, many producers feel that Tocai Friulano wines are muscular on their own and don't need oak aging, but others disagree. Certainly unlike Ribolla Gialla, Tocai Friulano wines do take to oak well, provided one doesn't exaggerate. A good Friulano is a pale straw-green, with delicate aromas of white flowers, sweet almonds, freshly cut grass, green fig, and green apple; the almond note is highly typical of Tocai Friulano wines.

### TOCAI FRIULANO

Cluster. Size: medium; shape: cylindrical/truncated pyramid, usually winged, compact; Berry. Size: medium; shape: spheroidal; skin: thin, yellow-green.

Clones: R 5, R 14, Fedit 19 C.S.G., ISV-F 3, ISV-F 6, ISV-F 8, VCR 9, VCR 100, VCR 33, ERSA FVG 200, ERSA FVG 202, ERSA FVG 203, ERSA FVG 204.

Harvest: early-mid September.

Specific requirements/characteristics: The variety is a resistant one and has problems only with botrytis in the fall. Its thin skin makes it very susceptible to autumn rains during harvest, a huge problem. The wine can be marred by off-odours because Tocai Friulano is a reductive variety.

### UCELUT

#### ***One of the many “bird grapes” of Italy***

Ucelut is rare, both as a grape variety and wine. However, it is worth seeking out, for its potentially one of Italy's greatest sweet wines. Ucelut is believed to be the result of the domestication of a native wild grapevine, and its name derives from the word “ucello” or bird, in English. It is in fact one of Italy's many *uve ucelline* (“bird grapes”) much like Veneto's Corvina or Rondinella. The name was probably attributed to the variety because the ripe berries are targeted by gluttonous birds. The fact that *Ucielute*



This more than a hundred year old old Tocai vine is in Cividale del Friuli. It can be considered to be a real living monument of this vine variety that has accompanied the lives of the Friulian people and has, for at least a century, influenced economy. Photograph by Claudio Mattaloni.



A bunch of grapes of Ucelut. By Bulfon E., Forti R., *Dalle colline spilimberghesi nuove viti e nuovi vini*, Provincia di Pordenone, 1987.

was also named in the *Vocabolario botanico friulano* written by Giulio Andrea Pirona in 1871, hinting that the variety was felt to be indigenous of the region already back then. Actually, not much historical information is available on Ucelut, though we know the variety was presented at the 1863 Udine Agriculture Exhibition, and the following year cultivation was started at the breeding center of the *Agricultural-Horticultural Establishment* (Stabilimento Agro-orticolo). The original production areas of Ucelut wine were centered around the villages of Ramuscello and San Giovanni, but by 1921 experts such as Dalmasso wrote that Ucelut's cultivation was diffuse around Valeriano, Castelnuovo del Friuli and Pinzano, in the province of Pordenone.

### The wine

Ucelut wines were always made in both a dry and sweet style, but it is thanks to Emilio Bulfon, who moved to the Spilimbergo hills near Pordenone in the 1970s and began producing Ucelut wines again, that we can speak of this wine today. Thanks to his passion and efforts, plus that of many other luminaries, the indigenous varieties of Spilimbergo and immediately surrounding areas such as Ucelut were admitted to the national registry of grape varieties.

Good Ucelut made from late harvested grapes is a wonderful dessert wine that is not overly sweet and not too full bodied. Aromas and flavours of sweet almonds, acacia honey, ripe mango and dried apricot are common. It is usually less sweet than Picolit and less tannic than Verduzzo wines made in the Ramandolo DOCG. There is no DOC, and so wines are generic Vino da tavola or IGT.

#### UCELUT

Grape/wine colour: white.

Bunch. Size: medium-large; shape: pyramidal, truncated, compact, with one to two wings.

Berry. Size: medium-large; shape: round; skin: thick, yellow-green.

Harvest: mid-late September.

Specific requirements/characteristics: sensitive to most common diseases especially botrytis. The size of its berries differentiates it very clearly from both Picolit and Verduzzo, the other two varieties that give famous sweet wines in FVG.

### VERDUZZO FRIULANO

#### *The other great sweet white hope*

Much like Picolit, Tocai Friulano and Ribolla Gialla, Verduzzo is an historic and archetypal cultivar of FVG. Many scientists believe that it descends from a domesticated local wild vine, though opinions vary. There are two Verduzzo Friulano subvarieties or biotypes in FVG, Verduzzo Giallo and Verduzzo Verde (a distinction first made by Poggi based on the colour of the floral cap); both are distinct from another variety also named Verduzzo, the Verduzzo Trevigiano of Veneto. The Verduzzo Friulano *verde* biotype used to be grown mainly in FVG flatland vineyards for dry white wine production; the *giallo* is at home on steep hillsides and has always been used to make especially sweet, at times very sweet, wine from air-dried grapes, such as for example in the Ramandolo DOCG (where some of the *verde* biotype is also found). Actually, according to Perusini (1935) there are two biotypes of Verduzzo Giallo found in the Ramandolo area of FVG: the *rosso* (characterized by a small compact bunch) and the *rascje* (which has instead a semicompact bunch). Due to its more loosely-packed bunch, the latter maybe better suited for late harvest wine production where the grapes are left on the vine to dehydrate, though in FVG's fickle autumn weather few producers are willing to risk true late harvests. The fact everyone thought Verduzzo Giallo was the superior of the two *Verduzzos* led growers



A bunch of grapes of Verduzzo Giallo. By Poggi G., *Atlante ampelografico*, 1939; paintings by Tiburzio Donadon.

A bunch of grapes of Verduzzo Verde. By Poggi G., *Atlante ampelografico*, 1939; paintings by Tiburzio Donadon.

to replace *verde* biotype with the *giallo*, so that the latter is now far more common than the latter. Verduzzo Trevigiano shares some morphological and phenological aspects with FVG's two *Verduzzos*, but in reality both grapevines and wines have very little in common. Most important, the wines made with Verduzzo Friulano are far superior in quality and renown.

### The wine

Verduzzo Friulano is grown all over FVG; it is most common in the province of Udine, and less so in the provinces of Gorizia and Pordenone, but can also be found in Veneto (DOC Lison-Pramaggiore). Verduzzo Friulano is used to make both dry and sweet wines; in general, wines simply labelled Verduzzo are fresh and bright, while those labelled Ramandolo, or those that carry the 'Passito' designation are unabashedly sweet. Usually, it is Verduzzo Verde that is sued to give

the light and delicately floral wines, while Verduzzo Giallo is sued to make wines that are richer, hinting at acacia honey and apricots. All Verduzzo wines are marked by aromas and flavours of sweet almonds or marzipan. Another highly typical feature of Verduzzo wines is that they are always inherently tannic, independently of being oak aged or not; this is because a characteristic of Verduzzo Friulano is that it's a rare tannic white grape. Ramandolo is the most famous wine made with *Verduzzo*; it can be made only in the cool, almost mountainous DOCG zone of the townships of Nimis, Faedis, Tarcento, Torlano and Ramandolo. The very steep slopes at roughly 250-370 meters a.s.l. of the town of Ramandolo are protected by Mount Bernadia, which shelters the grapes from cold northerly winds ensuring the area of Ramandolo has a slightly warmer microclimate than that of the other towns of the DOCG (and

for this reason many experts such as Perusini and Filiputti have gone on record as saying that the one true *grand cru* of Ramandolo is the eponymous town). In any case, all DOCG Ramandolo wines are thick and very sweet, with deep, extremely rich honey, caramelized almond, and ripe tropical fruit aromas and flavours.

### VERDUZZO FRIULANO

Cluster. Size: small, and smaller still in Verduzzo Giallo; shape: pyramidal, usually two wings, compact.  
Berry. Size: medium; shape: elliptical; skin: very thick, yellow-green, golden when exposed to the sun's rays.  
Clones: R 5, ISV - F2, VCR 2, VCR 100, VCR 200, ERSA FVG 220, ERSA FVG 221, ERSA FVG 222, VCR 303, CRAVIT-ERSA FVG 223.  
Harvest: late September/early October.  
Specific requirements/characteristics: slightly susceptible to both oidium and peronospora, but very resistant to botrytis thanks to its thick skin; prefers dry conditions. Verduzzo is not attacked as easily by noble rot as Picolit, though it can certainly be a target in the right area where the noble fungus is found.

### VITOVSKA *Border crossing*

Vitovska is yet another native white grape of Italy that grows only in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, though it is also common in Slovenia and Croatia where it is better known as *Organca*, *Gargania*, and Vitovska (in Slovenia, even more commonly as Vitovska Grganja or Garganja). Vitovska is commonly grown in the Vipava Valley of Slovenia's Carso or Kras. Even in FVG, it's not especially diffuse: it grows predominantly



Bunch of grapes of Vitovska.  
Photograph by Dean Dubokovič (by  
Cosma S., *Vitovska*, Canale 2007).

in the Friuli Carso, with scattered vines also found in Friuli Isonzo. Clearly, the name of the grape is of Slovenian origin, probably deriving either from *Vitez* (“the wine of the chevalier”) or Vitovlje, a small town located in the Slovenian Brda region. Clearly, whether Vitovska is native to Italy or Slovenia is the subject of much debate. Actually, there is little historical information of any kind available on Vitovska. Recent genetic studies have suggested that Vitovska is an offspring of Malvasia Bianca Lunga (also known as Malvasia del Chianti) and Prosecco Tondo. Other genetic data revealed that Vitovska Grganja and Vitovska are not the same variety, but share a first degree (parent/progeny)

relationship.

I was among the first Italian wine journalists to try Vitovska wine, back in the early 1980s, a grape nobody really knew much about. The wines were exceptionally good though, and so Vitovska’s path to stardom was assured from day one. Actually, Vitovska’s renaissance began in the 1960s, when Luigi Lupinc, a small wine producer in San Pelagio di Prepotto in the province of Trieste), was the first to perform field selections of Vitovska, producing wine. Others soon followed, most importantly the well known Edi Kante. He and other producers believed in monovarietal versions than merely using the variety only as a blending agent as had been commonly done in the past.

### The wine

There are roughly 70 hectares under vine in the whole DOC Friuli Carso, and fourteen are of Vitovska. Vitovska wine is delicate and nuanced, with lemony, pear, white flower and chlorophyll aromas and flavours.

#### VITOVSKA

Bunch. Size: medium; shape: pyramidal, compact.

Berry. Size: small; shape: round; skin: yellow-green.

Harvest: early/mid September.

Specific characteristics/requirements: Vitovska sometimes shows the phenomenon of gigantism, as clusters can reach 1 kg in some cases; the mean weight is around 250-300 g; it needs careful canopy management to reach full berry ripening.

## Less well known Friuli Venezia Giulia cultivars and wines

### CJANORIE

*A delightful pale, light red wine*

Also known as Chianòrie or Cjanòria, it was never diffusely grown in FVG, limited in its cultivation to hillsides around Maniago, Meduno, Navarons and in the area of Vito d'Asio.

Its name derives from *cjanôr*, a word in the Friulian language meaning 'pale'. Once again, Emilio Bulfon, a trained viticulturalist, is the person we have to thank if today we can taste a wine made with Cjanorie.

ùIn 1972, he realized that the grapevines growing around his Spilimbergo were completely different than any he had ever seen or studied previously. He set out to select, propagate and save these forgotten grapevines, of which Cjanorie was one, with the fundamental help of Enrico Murador, past director of the Agriculture Department of the province of Pordenone.



Bunch of grapes and leaf of Cjanorie.

### The wine

Apparently, the wine was highly thought of by local noble families in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but had fallen by the wayside in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A real shame, as the wine can be lovely. Unfortunately, it is rarely bottled as a monovariety wine, but I for one love its very pale red and light bodied mouthfeel, the delicate aromas and flavours of red berries and vibrant acidity. Cjanorie grows nowadays mainly around Gemona, Artegna, Peonis, Venzona and Pinzano, and my hope is that more producers will start making monovariety wine from it.

#### CJANORIE

Bunch. Size: medium; shape: conical, winged, sparse.

Berry. Size: medium-small; shape: spheroidal/oval; skin: blue-black.

Harvest: late September.

Specific characteristics/requirements: very vigorous and fertile.

### CIVIDIN

#### *One of Julius Caesar's wines*

Cividin's name derives from the town of Cividale, the ancient *Forum Julii* founded by Julius Caesar. However, Marzotto wrote in 1923 that Cividin did not originate in Cividale but in the Valley of Natisone at San Pietro al Natisone where it was once very common. So the jury's out to the effective origin of the grape's name. Nonetheless, Cividin was apparently very highly thought of in the past and the wine was much sought after for wedding banquets of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first description of the variety is that of Maniago in his *Catalogue of the grape varieties of the Lombard-Venetian Reign* and seems to be making a comeback today, with a number of FVG estates growing and experimenting with it, which was unheard of as recently as fifteen years ago.



Bunch of grapes of Cividin.

### The wine

Today Cividin grows mainly around Pinzano al Tagliamento, though recently Cividin vines have been identified in old vineyards near the upper reaches of the Vipacco river and even in the Carso, near Trieste. Cividin can give a rather big, medium to full bodied wine with echoes of white flowers, honey and herbs.

#### CIVIDIN

Bunch. Size: medium; shape: cylindrical, rarely winged large wings, compact.

Berry: Size: small; shape: spheroidal; skin: light yellow-green, amber when fully exposed to the sun.

Harvest: late September.

Specific characteristics/requirements: very sensitive to oidium; if not in well exposed sites it fails to ripen completely.



Bunch of grapes of Cordenossa.

## CORDENOSSA

### *Getting back*

Another variety typical of FVG's Spilimbergo hills, it is grown mainly around San Vito al Tagliamento (Marzotto 1923) and San Giorgio della Richinvelda. A reliable, large producer, it was always held in high esteem by locals who distinguished between two biotypes: Cordenossa Grande, reportedly the more common and better of the two, and Cordenossa Piccola, with smaller berries and a more compact bunch.

### **The wine**

Only grown in FVG's Pordenone province, around towns such as San Giorgio della Richinvelda and Pinzano al Tagliamento. The Regional Institute for the Development of Agriculture (ERSA) in FVG, in collaboration with the town of San Giorgio della Richinvelda and the Tondat estate, recently recreated the *Vin di*

*Uchì*, an historic blend of three varieties (Palomba, Refosco Gentile and Cordenossa, once commonly grown in the flatland vineyards near San Giorgio della Richinvelda. Cordenossa provides tannins to blends, but in fact monovariety bottling I have had over the years have struck me as being not especially tannic, with a medium-dark purple-ruby hue, aromas of red berries and fresh herbs but with high total acidity thanks to loads of tartaric acid, which clearly makes the tannins stand out more. There is only one monovariety bottling made in FVG I know of.

### CORDENOSSA

Bunch. Size: medium; shape: conical-usually winged, sparse.

Berry: Size: medium; shape: spheroidal; skin: thin skinned, purple-red. Harvest: late September.

Specific requirements/characteristics: very vigorous; shows asynchronous maturation of the bunch; needs well exposed sites to ripen fully; good disease resistance.

## FORGIARIN

### *Something new and great*

The town of Forgaria (*Forjarie* in Friulian), where this cultivar probably originates from, gives the grapevine its name. It should not be confused with other similarly named varieties such as Uva Fogarina, a completely different variety. Forgiarin wines were already known and sought after in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though it was only ever grown in a limited area, around the towns of Maniago, Spilimbergo



Bunch of grapes of Forgiarin.

and San Daniele, most likely due to its extreme oidium sensitivity.

### **The wine**

Today, Forgiarin is grown only in the Pordenone province, around Pinzano al Tagliamento and Castelnovo del Friuli, although more producers are starting to pay attention to what is undoubtedly a high quality wine grape. I love a good Forgiarin wine, and I think it resembles wines made with the Schiava, variety such as Lago di Caldaro or Santa Maddalena. Bright red, it offers lovely floral, almond, and red berry aromas and flavours. It has harmonious but refreshing acidity and low alcohol levels.

### FORGIARIN

Bunch. Size: medium-large; shape: pyramidal and medium-long, with 2-3 large wings, compact. Berry. Size: medium-small; shape: spheroidal; skin: thin, pale reddish-blue. Harvest: late September.

Specific characteristics/requirements: extremely sensitive to oidium.



Bunch of grapes of Corvino.  
Photograph by Claudio Mattaloni.

## CORVINO

Also called Curvin, this variety is reduced to only a few sporadic vines in old vineyards but is the subject of ongoing university studies as the grapevine is of potentially high quality as a wine grape. In this light, it's not surprising that it was once far more abundant and seems to have even been the second most cultivated red grape variety in some parts of FVG. Its name recalls the dark plumage of blackbirds (*corvo*, 'raven'). Microvinifications of the wine have shown deep colour, intense red berry aromas and flavours and plenty of tannic structure, but it requires plenty of sunlight and heat to ripen fully, otherwise wines can be tart, green and harsh.

## FUMAT

Like many other of Italy's grapes, this too is named after a physical trait: Fumat derives either from the smoky-black colour of its berries or the slightly smoky aromas and flavours of the wine. A grape variety once common between San Daniele and Fagagna right



Leaf and bunch of grapes of Fumat.  
By Poggi G., *Atlante ampelografico*, 1939; paintings by Tiburzio Donadon.

up into the hills of Spilimbergo, today it is found in scattered plots only in the latter production zone. It was rapidly phased out by growers because it is not especially disease resistant (Fumat is especially susceptible to oidium and peronospora). Monovariety wines are ruby-purple in hue, with bright aromas of blueberry and blackberry, and lively spicy blackberry flavours resonate long on the palate too. The wine does have a noticeably flinty or smoky note as well.

## REFOSCONE

Despite what most books on the subject state, Refoscone is not Refosco di Faedis: a simple look at the grapevine in any vineyard will clear this misconception immediately. For one, Refoscone's leaves are much bigger (unmistakably much, much bigger) than the round, almost dentless leaves of Refosco Nostrano. Some confusion on the variety's identity is understandable, for, like Refosco Nostrano, Refoscone also grows mainly in vineyards planted



Bunches of grapes of Refoscone.

around Torreano and Faedis, so it often shared vineyard space with Refosco Nostrano. Furthermore, it was also abundant, seeing as it had always been one of the most planted *Refoscos* of all, being a very high yielding variety characterized by very strong vigour. Refoscone may turn out to be a high quality variety, but presently there aren't any monovariety wines by which to back up that statement. Generally speaking, Refoscone wines are characterized by fruitier but simpler aromas and flavours than those of wines made with Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso or Refosco Nostrano; in my experience these also tend to be less floral and less persistent (though it is hard to determine how much human talent had a role to play in these findings).

**REFOSCONO**

Cluster. Size: large; shape: cylindrical, usually two wings, compact.

Berry. Size: medium-large; shape: spheroidal-oval; skin: thin but resistant, very dark blue.

Harvest: late.

Clones: n/a.

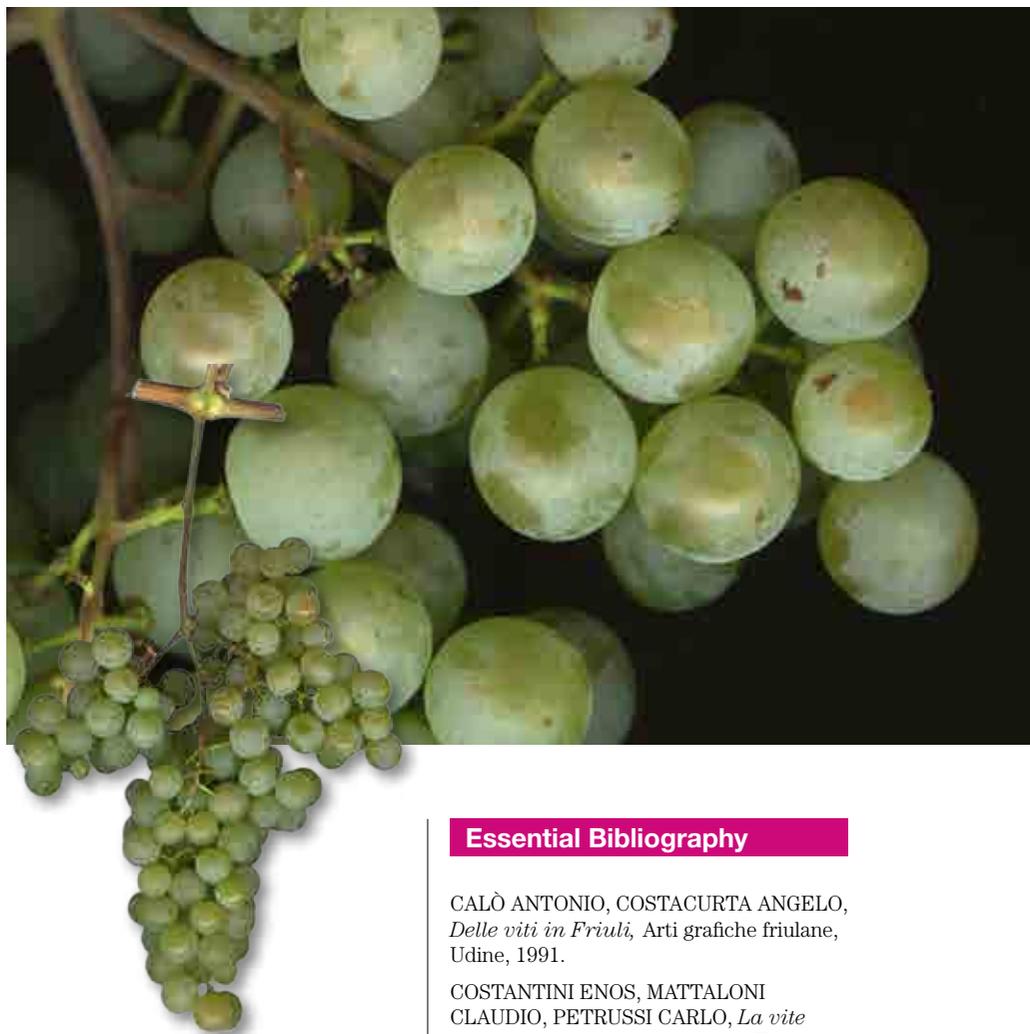
Specific requirements/characteristics: the bunch is large, obviously bigger than that of Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso, and the basal buds are more fertile; for these two reasons, Refoscone is much more productive than Refosco del Peduncolo Rosso (and all other Refoscos in general). The thin skin and compact bunch makes it susceptible to grey rot, but it has more problems with oidium too.

**SCIAGLIN*****Back to the wine future***

The variety's name (and its synonyms like Scjablin, Scjarlin, Schiaglin, Scjaulin and Schiarlina) derives from *schivolino* or Slavic. It was described at the 1863 Regional Exposition of Grape Varieties organized by the Friuli Agricultural Association and Sannino wrote in 1921 that Sciaglin plantings were still very common at the beginning of the new century.

**The wine**

Sciaglin grows near Pordenone, Maniago, Spilimbergo, Fagagna and Vito d'Asio in the western-most part of FVG. There are at least two different monovariety wines made, and they are both lovely. White flowers, lime, yellow apple, lime, minerals, chlorophyll, and tangerine notes abound, the wine is fresh and lively in the



Bunch of grapes of Sciaglin.

mouth with a lightbodied texture. I think it is a delicate wine of great refinement and I really do believe more bottlings of Sciaglin would be welcomed by wine lovers everywhere.

**SCIAGLIN**

Bunch. Size: medium-small; shape: pyramidal, sparse, with one to two wings.

Berry. Size: medium-small; shape: oval; skin: thin and soft-skinned, yellow-green.

Harvest: late September/early October.

Specific requirements/characteristics: disease resistant, it's a regular, dependable producer.

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Stefano COSMA

# Grapevines and Wine in Trieste

I

It might seem strange to us, people of the twenty-first century, but wine production used to be very important in the area of Trieste and its surroundings in past centuries. It used to have a prominent role that this territory has been working hard to reclaim in the last decades focusing, once again, on quality rather than on quantity like it did in the past.

## The Roots of Viticulture in the Trieste area

In Roman times, Pliny, in his *Naturalis Historia*, sang the praises of the wine of Pucino, a castle near Trieste.

The Middle Ages provided us with many more historical sources that give us a fascinating glimpse of the *Civitas Tergestina*, the city of Trieste, of that time. So we know, for example, that in 1253 Trieste

bought from the Bishop the right to levy a tax on wine. In the following century it was Trieste that offered wine, first in honour of the Doge of Venice, and then of the Duke of Austria (Trieste was Austrian from 1382 to 1918): a sort of "regalia", a gift, which, until the time of the Empress Maria Theresa, consisted in 100 *orne* (=56,60 hectolitres) of Trieste Ribolla which can now be identified with the Prosecco wine, a blend of grapes that also contains the Gargania vine, currently known as Vitovska.

The cellars of many wine producers, all medium-small sized, are particularly striking because they are rock-hewn in the Karst, which creates a truly unique atmosphere. Photograph by Massimo Crivellari (POR FESR 2007-2013).

The Ribolla wine was doubtlessly the most important wine of that time and its name can be found in numerous documents, like the revenues of the Lordship of Duino (1296), when farmers of the Karst paid their tributes in wine, in two distinct varieties: Terrano and Ribolla.

From a medieval document in the ancient local language we learn that at least three varieties of wine were produced there: *hav fat quindis ornis de terram, doi de refosch e zinch de blanch* 'I've made fifteen *orne* (56.6 litres each) of Terrano, two of Refosco and five of White wine'.

The rules concerning viticulture and wine contained in the Statutes of Trieste, drawn up in 1318 and in 1350 to protect the local production, are very interesting. Only the "podestà" (mayor) was authorized to introduce wine and other food in the territory of Trieste for himself and his family, with the exception of Ribolla. In 1321, the ploughing of private woods in the town's surroundings for the purpose of starting the cultivation of vineyards was allowed, in order to eliminate the importation of wine. According to the Statute of 1350, those who were not citizens or residents of Trieste, were not allowed to plant new vineyards in the area, they could only renew them. Moreover, only citizens and residents were allowed to "...bring the grapes originated from vineyards of other areas: nonetheless, they had to swear to the judges of the

city that the grapes came from their properties or from those of their wives or children." The merchants, however, were able to transit foreign wines, since they were allowed to have wines from Greece (Candia, Greco, Malvasia, Romania) for their personal use. Always in the Statutes and in the miniatures they contain, we find that there were the *messetti* (intermediaries) who dealt with the trading wine and oil, as well as the *canevaro*, that is the cellar man of churches and brotherhoods, and the tavern keeper. From the sixteenth century onward, a number of quotations can be found related to Prosecco, the ancestor of the famous wine from the Northeast, named after the village which is still part of the municipality of Trieste.

### **Trieste Becomes a Free Port**

In 1719 the Austrian Emperor, Charles VI, declares Trieste a "free port" of the Empire. From that point on, wine will no longer be the town's main resource, both for the public and the private sector; it is to be replaced by businesses, the production of rope, shipping activities, construction and later, by insurance, coffee roasting, the production of beer and spirits. Nevertheless, privileges remain for the 'vino paesano' (local wine) as opposed to the 'foresto' (foreign wine) and with the increase in trade by land and sea, the export of wine from Trieste increases, but so does smuggling and alteration of the

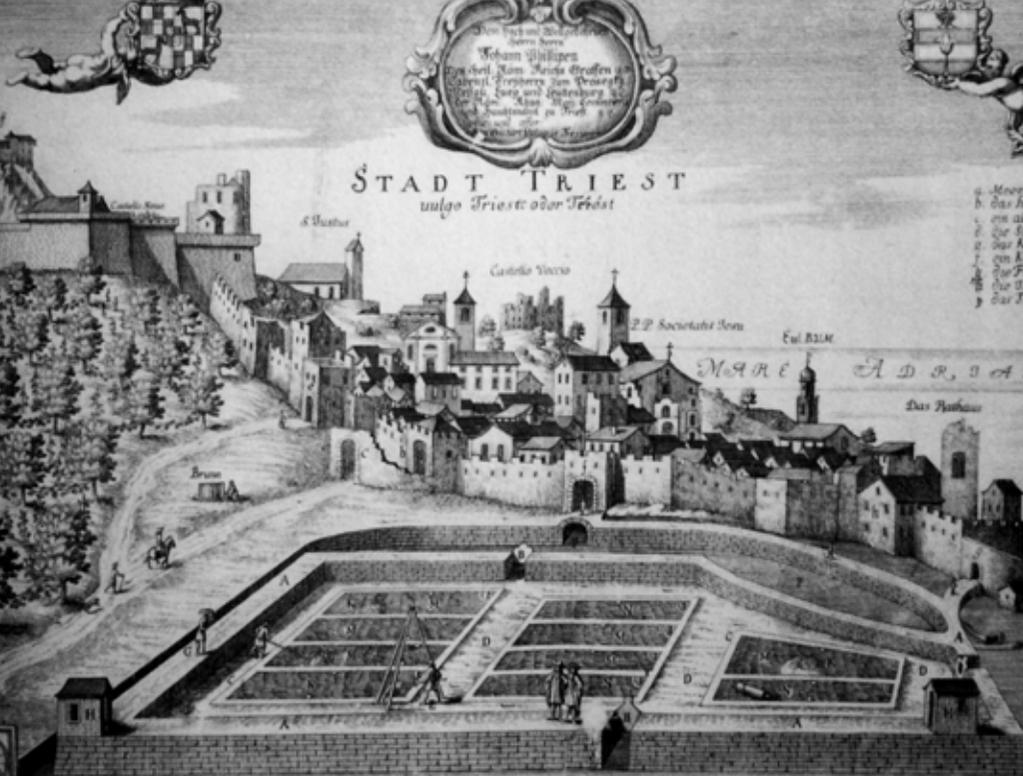
product.

Since 1776 the need for annual surveys – ordered by the Austrian governor Count Zinzendorf – on the wine produced, imported and found in the taverns and inns, is also due to the request of exemption from the new tax imposed on the wine harvest in the territory of Trieste. From the documentation on this issue we learn that high quality wines, both white and red, were produced in Trieste and in the surrounding villages.

A classification distinguished them from common wines, those for a more widespread consumption and very fine wines, made with greater diligence, called liquors.

The latter are divided into white wines (white Moscato, Prosecco, or 'vino dolce di Trieste' which means 'Sweet Wine of Trieste', formerly known as Ribolla) and red wines (red Moscato, Refosco and Marzemino).

We also learn which was the destination of the wines from Trieste: the most valuable ones (liquors) were mostly shipped to places beyond Ljubljana; Prosecco to Carinthia (Austria), whereas the various types of Prosecco wine as well as sweet common wines used to be sent to Slovenia. It would have been more profitable – someone wrote in 1776 – to export all the wines to the Cragno (Kranj) region (now Slovenia), to Carinthia and Styria, whereas in town the wines of Austrian Friuli and Veneto might have been drunk as table wines.



Engraving depicting the town of Trieste, 1689. On the left, at the foot of the castle, you can clearly see the grape vines that use the trees as supports and look like garlands hanging between the trees. This was the most widely used system for raising vines.

### **Trieste: a Destination for Celebrities**

Trieste was the destination of famous travellers who appreciated the quality of life, the colourful people and the culinary delights: Giacomo Casanova, Lorenzo da Ponte, Stendhal, Camillo Cavour, James Joyce... Some of these, in their memories and in their writings praise local wines. It is worth mentioning a few of them, given that this article will be read by Italian and foreign visitors of the Expo2015 in Milan. The German geographer Büsching, in 1775, recalls that in the surroundings of the city 'exquisite wines are made, for example the Tcernecall and Marzemin wines' and stressed that the district of Muggia 'produces exquisite grapes which make excellent sweet wines'. The Dutchman Johan Meerman, in 1791, described the Trieste Karst like this: '... these endless stretches of rock grow flora of extreme beauty (...),

here, too, the wine wraps around the trunks of the trees.' The Bohemian Franz Rzehak, two years later, was much more accurate and said that in the German hotel near the town hall of Trieste everyone paid 34 'soldi' for lunch, one bottle of wine included. He cited sweet wines and muscat, stressing that a bottle of red wine cost 12 or 14 'soldi', while an equal quantity of Austrian wine costed 40 'soldi'! There are many testimonies of senior officials of Napoleon, like General Louis Charles Desaix (1797) who were impressed by the 'cultivated terraced land with vines' and Charles Nodier, fascinated by Trieste. Aspects that, in 1802, even the Saxon Seume did not fail to notice: 'on the mountains around, terraces have been built, up and down, and vineyards have been planted' In 1818 the very attentive Sicilian musician Matteo Di Bevilacqua wrote: 'The wine producing territory of Tri-

este differs greatly from that of other parts of Italy. Five are the qualities of the wine called 'Nos-trano' (local), and here they are: Di Città (of the City), this is how it is commonly called; Marzamino; Sevedino; Refosco and Prosecco. [As for] the Marzamino and Refosco that you make in the country house of the Swiss Consul General Andrew Griot [...] I could almost say that the Burgundy and Montepulciano wines cannot face comparison to these!'. Baron Dahlerup, from Denmark, between 1849 and 1850, living in Villa Necker in Trieste, in whose garden there was 'a big vineyard, a pergola with a copy of beautiful ripe grapes of exceptional quality'. Jacob Christoph Heer, born in Zurich in 1859, who lived for several months in Monfalcone in 1887, tells us about a 'tasty and healthful' wine made between Trieste and Duino in Roman times. Many other small but exciting allusions on the wines from Trieste are made by the Germans Karl Küttner (1798) and Wilhelm Müller (1824), by Cavour (1836), and by the explorer and writer Richard F. Burton with his Scottish wife Isabel Arundell. Previously, also the famous Siena physician Pier Andrea Mattioli (1548) and the Slovene scientist Janez Vajkard Valvasor (1689) must be remembered. A special mention should be made to Ludwig van Beethoven who, as we read in his diaries - November 5, 1823 when he lived in Vienna - drank Picolit with Trieste oysters. At the time Picolit was also



The difficult harvest in the "pàstini", the terraces with vineyards and olive trees that from Santa Croce, Prosecco and Contovello descend towards the sea. It was a 'heroic' kind of viticulture that was abandoned in the 1960s. (Photographs by Mario Magajna and Guido Radovich, Slovenian National Library of Trieste).

produced in the Karst, so that the scholar Hlubeck classified it as the "Italica tergestana" (Italian, of Trieste) variety. In 1825, six years before the Assicurazioni Generali, even a company that offered an insurance against hail was set up! In 1841 a Communal Agricultural School was founded under the direction of the historian Pietro Kandler.

1857 is the year in which the 'Società d'orticoltura del Litorale' (Association of Coastal Horticulture) was founded. Two years later the monthly 'L'Ortolano' (The Market Gardener) was created but both the association and the monthly paper will soon expand their area of responsibility and change names; the first one into 'Società agraria di Trieste' (Agricultural Society of Trieste) (1868) and the other one into 'L'Amico dei Campi' (Friend of the Fields) (1865).

The 'Società agraria di Trieste' conducted a census of the vineyards, to collect information on the damage caused to viticulture by powdery mildew, downy mildew and phylloxera, giving advice to growers on how to fight these adversities, which varieties and which rootstocks to employ. Leafing through the pages of the monthly 'L'Amico dei Campi' one discovers the evolution of viticulture in Trieste from the second half of the eighteenth century to the Great War: French varieties were introduced. With the aim of spreading the wine and sparkling wine production, in 1888 a fair attended by growers from all

over the Austro-Hungarian Empire was organized. In 1891, the most important speaker at the IV Congress of Austrian wine held in Gorizia, was Giovanni Bolle (1850-1924), a true scientist, who was born in Prosecco.

In the late nineteenth century the most common varieties were, among red wines, Refosco, Teran and Rossara, and for white wines, Moscato, Prosecco, Malvasia and Ribolla (Gargagna).

### The Twentieth Century

In 1906 the Italian ampelographer Girolamo Molon catalogued the Trieste Malvasia as a grape variety differentiating it from the Istrian Malvasia. In 1911 an interesting promotional wine testing was held at the Museum of the Chamber of Commerce. But a civilization was coming to an end. With the outbreak of the war, which will send the people of Trieste to the Eastern Front starting from the summer of 1914, there will be a profound transformation of agriculture in Trieste and its neighbouring areas that, at the end of the conflict, will become Italian. The deeply scarred territory, goes from being the south of a great empire, to becoming the northeast of the Kingdom of Italy; the city, the main port of a great empire, became one of the many Italian cities that face the sea. Grape harvests resumed regularly several years after the end of the conflict, so that the first new statistics date back only to 1929. As recalled by the geographer Ernesto Massi in his valuable work of 1933, all the typical products of local

wine changed, except the Terrano wine. A wine to which Quirino Lustrì (alias Orazio Sturli) even dedicated a poem, a small convivial one, in 1931. In the next edition of 1941 a preface written by Silvio Benco is to be found, with illustrations by Ramiro Meng, father of architect Paolo Meng, who some years ago designed the magnificent cellar of Zidarich in Prepotto (Dui-  
no).

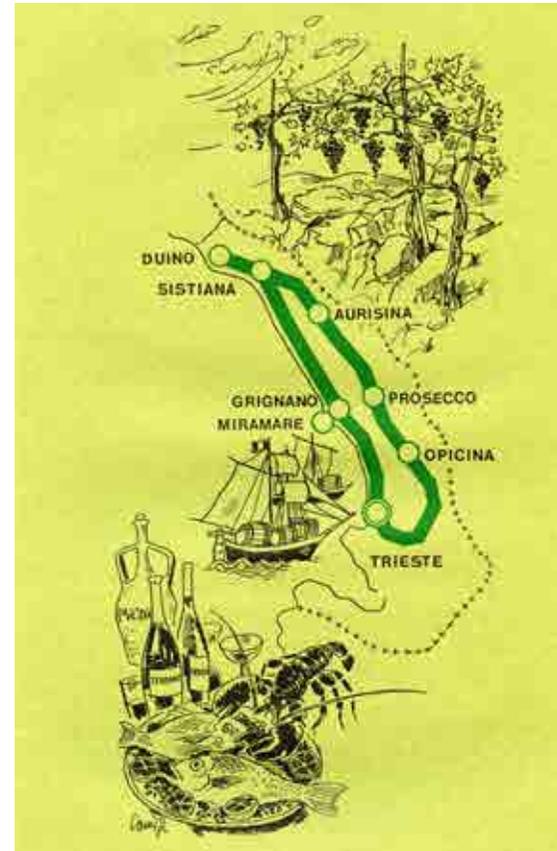
What can be said about the situation during World War II? Some information can be evinced from a publication of the Central Institute of Statistics, which analyzed the situation in three particular years: in 1938 1,606 hectares of vineyards were estimated; in the years 1949/1950 an average of 1,329 hectares. Let us read a few paragraphs:

'... The grapevine is more important than anything else. It annually provides an average of 77,000 tons of grapes including about 6-7,000 tons which are consumed directly, while the remaining are vinified by producers. [...] The white wine of the Karst is the product of different varieties of grapes vinified together and its quality is just alright. The grapes used, Ribolla, Glera, Gargania [now called Vitovska], Malvasia and some other minor ones, living almost in the geographical limits of the crop vine, give very often an unripe grape with little sugar; the wine, in fact, is low in alcohol. The arenaceous-marly area, instead, produces wines that are completely different from those described above; the production is around 40-47,000 hectolitres, of



Gorizia, in the 1920s. Label of the Abuja company of Gorizia. Calling it "Vino fino d'Istria" (Fine Wine of Istria) this company traded a red blend produced also with grapes coming from the area of San Dorligo della Valle/Dolina and from Muggia that can be considered, geographically, already Istria.

which approximately two thirds are represented by white wines and one third by red wines. Here winemaking is much more accurate and advanced, and although many of these varieties are vinified together, the product is generally good and very alcoholic; it is not uncommon to find white wines with an alcohol content of over 14 degrees. The grape varieties are widespread: the Istrian Malvasia, Malvasia di Ronchi, Glera, Gargania, Pinella, Canariola, Ribolla; among the vines recently introduced, there abounds Sauvignon, Sémillon, Italian Riesling, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc. As a result of these new varieties the quality of the grapes has significantly improved, we produce over 1,500 hectolitres of wine such as Malvasia, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Sauvignon".



In 1969 Emilio Caucigh designed this wine tour in the province of Trieste. In the upper part you can see the Karst vines growing trained along a pergola. Below you can see an example of what the sea in Trieste can offer. The small amphora bears the word *Pucino*, the name of a wine produced on site in Roman times. The two modern bottles bear the label of the wine names *Terrano* (red) and *Prosecco* (white). The ship with the barrels underlines the role that this town played also in the wine trade.

In the Karst area the conditions of viticulture are generally good; the characteristics of the soil and the hilly terrain provide an environment suitable for growing healthy vines. State intervention has prompted farmers to make new vines; in fact, over 650,000 grafted vines were planted between 1947 and 1950.

Surveys conducted in 1950 showed that approximately 63% of the wine production of the province consists of white wines, with an alcohol content variation from 10.8 degrees to 14 degrees; the rest, about 37%, consists of red wines, among which Terrano emerges for its organoleptic characteristics. The alcohol content, in red wines, ranges from 9-10 degrees for the Terrano to 11-11.5 degrees in the others.

After nearly two decades with no technical publication for the farmers of Trieste, the fortnightly 'Rinascita Agricola' (Agricultural Rebirth) was founded in 1953 thanks to the intuition of the agronomist and oenologist Duilio Cosma, who had just returned to Trieste after twenty years spent in other Italian regions, and the journalist Bruno Natti. 'Rinascita Agricola' was published until 1969, providing technical information to subscribers, tax deadlines, legal announcements and news related to the agricultural, horticultural and floricultural world of Trieste and its province. But also Rai [Italy's national public broadcasting company] programmes related to agriculture, accurately scheduled, book reviews and much more. There were also interesting interviews with local farmers: in one of these, with Luigi Lupinc of Prepotto, the Vitovska grape is first mentioned. As for vineyards and wineries, advice was given on a monthly basis.



The villages of Prosecco and Contovello seen from above. In the background you can see the town of Trieste. Photograph by Stefano Zanini.

In 1957 a competition and exhibition of wines produced in the province of Trieste was held. In 1959 the wines of the area of Muggia were put in competition, with 12 exhibitors and 20 samples of wines including Merlot, Malvasia, Pinot Gris, Refosco and others. June 28 and 29, 1967 the first exhibition and tasting of local wines, promoted by a consortium of producers of wines of the city of Trieste, took place at Santa Croce. Simultaneously also the first 'Exhibition of the Pucino' was held. The famous wine of Roman times, recovered and re-launched 'because the vines of these areas – according to an article of the time – can make a product that can equal the best known Italian wines [...], the white Prosecco wine was so appreciated that the vines were moved to the area of Conegliano giving its name to the famous Prosecco of Conegliano'. The City Council allocated 3,600,000 lire for the restoration and weeding of the paths between Prosecco and Santa Croce in order to facilitate moving and grape harvest operations to farmers in the area. In the summer of 1968 eighty types of wine, selected among the most famous of the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia ranging 'from the most important producers of Friuli to the small farmers of the Karst' were presented throughout the season at the Enoteca Regionale (Regional Winehouse) of Trieste in the harbour of Grignano under the fortress of the Miramare Castle, with the participation of writer and film director Mario Soldati. In July



Bunches of Prosecco grapes.

1968, four wine festivals followed: at Santa Croce with 34 exhibitors; at San Dorligo della Valle; the VII exhibition of typical wines of the Municipality of Duino Aurisina, and finally, the traditional festival of the Terrano wine at Monrupino.

### Contemporary History

What has been written so far is the history of the viticulture of the past of Trieste, both distant and recent, while contemporary history started, we can say, in 1985 with the establishment of the 'Carso-Kras' DOC (denominazione di origine controllata, i.e. Registered Designation of Origin). The Consortium was founded in 1993 and after a couple of years of merging with the 'Collio' DOC it closed down in 2013. It was an association of thirty producers promoting wines through demonstrations and tasting, and the publication of brochures and books.

The landscape of the plateau, which has rich and varied flora, is characterized by small flat or slightly inclined plots, while hilly

areas sloping down to the sea are arranged in terraces called 'pàstini'. The Karst is a barren and difficult land, to cultivate it you have to reclaim and make fertile and welcoming an environment that then repays the effort by giving excellent products.

Most of the territories that fall in the municipalities of Muggia and San Dorligo della Valle have brown soil on Flysch, while the soil of the Karst has an intense reddish colour, due to the large amount of iron it contains. The other features of the area are the influence of the nearby sea and at the same time of the Bora, the powerful cold wind that lashes down from the north-east.

The grape varieties currently grown include, as elsewhere, autochthonous vines and those, mainly French, introduced in the mid '80s. The best known wine produced by a native variety is definitely the Terrano with its acid and vigorous flavour and characteristic ruby red colour. According to medical studies it has excellent antioxidant properties and, in the past, some scholars identified it with the Pucino known by the Romans. The grape that produces the Terrano wine is the Refosco d'Istria, but we will not get into disputes and claims, since the Karst also produces a wine called Refosco. Taste both and then draw your own conclusions.

Among the white natives we would like to mention Malvasia, Glera and Vitovska. The latter has become the white signature wine of the Karst since the beginning of the



This was the magnificent landscape where the best wine of Trieste was produced. The terraced land, called *pàstini*, descends steeply from Prosecco and Contovello towards the sea. In the background you can see the castle of Miramare.

By Cosma S., Dubokovic D., *Vitovska. I vigneti dal mare al Carso*, Canale, 2007.

last decade. Among the varieties of French origin, Merlot, Sauvignon and Chardonnay have spread since the second half of the '80s. Other vines, after the outbreak of the First World War, are either not present any more, or the amount of grapes they now offer is so small that they are mixed with those of the most common varieties.

In recent years there have been some throwbacks, such as the production of the 'chiaretto spumante (sparkling claret) Prosecco', as Benco wrote in 1941, and Brezanka, a typical white wine of the Valley of Moccò.

The cellars of many wine producers, all medium-small sized, are particularly striking because they are rock-hewn in the Karst, which creates a truly unique atmosphere.

## The Osmiza

Wines, as well as other products of the province of Trieste (especially cheese and ham), can, and indeed, must be tasted in the 'osmize' which should not be skipped. Such inns are similar to the taverns, a world to enjoy and discover, made of food treats and local traditions related to the Slovenian community.

To find an *osmiza* (*osmica* in Slovenian) just look for a tree branch displayed at the entrance.

The term *osmica* derives from *osem*, or "eight" in Slovenian, as this was the number of opening days originally granted to the hosts for the sale of their products. In these places you can buy or drink wines directly in the cellar of the manufacturer, thanks to a decree issued in 1784 by Joseph II of Austria, which enabled farmers to sell bulk wine produced at home for a period of just eight days. Even today, in turn, the farmers of the Karst plateau open their cellars, offering the food they produce.

The *osmica* is welcoming, homemade, informal, offering a wide range of activities including food, wine, music and dancing. There are not two *osmice* alike, each one offering diverse products, from wine to pork, which is brought to the table in every possible form: ham (hot with grated horseradish), bacon of all types (raw, cooked, smoked, peppered), *ossocollo* (*capicollo* or



The Istrian Refosco in a beautiful plate by Greta Turkovič (*Ampelografski Atlas* 2003). This is the variety the wine known as *Terrano* comes from – still nowadays one of the most characteristic wines from the area of Trieste.

*coppa*), raw ham, salami, accompanied by the inevitable slices of bread, often homemade, from various types of cheese, such as the local production of Tabor cheese, and pickles. The *habitués* are easy to detect because they order a boiled egg. A widespread belief is, in fact, that this egg is able to absorb the large quantities of *Terrano* and *Malvasia* that accompany assorted cold cuts. This is not a place for people who diet, but for those who do not fear calories and the threat of high cholesterol levels must know that one eats well in the *osmiza*, the quantities are generous and the prices reasonable.

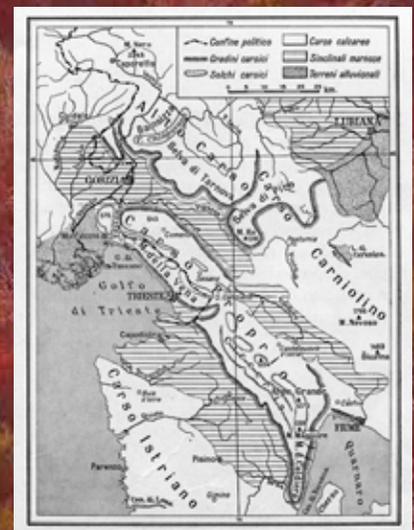
Marianna DEGANUTTI

# Fulvio Tomizza's depiction of the Karst

The Karst from above (Photograph by Stefano Zanini).

The Karst area that lies beyond Trieste at the north-eastern edge of Italy is a limestone plateau that offers some distinctive geographical, cultural and social traits which cannot be found anywhere else. The narrow strip of Karst that belongs to Italy (most of the Karst lies within Slovenia) is a fascinating land which borders the Adriatic Sea (more specifically the Gulf of Trieste) and presents a rocky and harsh environment that cannot pass without notice. Not for nothing, it is this aspect which prevails in Jan Morris's description in

*Trieste: And the Meaning of Nowhere*: "Organically it is just as isolated. Close behind Trieste, pressing down towards the sea, stands an outcrop plateau of the Julian Alps. [...] It is a loveless limestone formation from which geologists have evolved the generic name of karst. The Italians call it the Carso, the Slovenians the Kras, the Croats the Krš, and in all their languages the name is onomatopoeic: the Karst is tough, flinty, pot-hole country, sparsely vegetated and riddled with caverns and underground streams" (Morris 2001, 18).



The Karst taken from Giorgio Valussi, *Friuli Venezia Giulia*, UTET, 1961.

## Fulvio Tomizza

The arid and, to some extent, inhospitable Karst should not deceive as this upland offers a unique nature which does not fail to surprise, with breathtaking views over the sea, villages castled over the ridges, traditions which have been preserved through time, and an invaluable cultural mix. Among the writers who have truly pinpointed the essence of the Karst is Fulvio Tomizza. Even though an immediate association would rightly be the well-known Triestine writer Scipio Slataper (1888-1915) – who dedicated an entire work *Il mio Carso* to this rural region, characterized by a “hovel with a thatched roof blackened by rain and smoke” (Slataper 1993, 208) – thanks to his deep knowledge of borderland dynamics and his sharp eye for detail, Tomizza captured the most distinguishable aspects of the Karst even more.

Fulvio Tomizza was born in the Istrian village of Materada in 1935, a southward land not too far from Trieste which at that time belonged to Italy. Like the Karst, Tomizza’s home country should be considered a borderland, which had been historically shaped by both the Italians settled on the coast, and the “Slavs” (in Istria, both Croats and Slovenes) of the hinterland, forming a hybrid “grey” zone. The combination of the two elements certainly led to fruitful results, but also to contrasts, such as when Istria passed under Tito’s Yugoslavia following the post-war border redefinition,



The cover of *Alle spalle di Trieste* (Bompiani 2009), the collection of essays Tomizza wrote about the land beyond Trieste, which includes the Karst plateau.

causing the massive exile of the Italian population from the area. This fact marked a fracture in Tomizza’s life, driving him into exile to Trieste, the city where he settled down and became a famous writer and journalist. Tomizza has been a very prolific author: he published more than 40 works, including novels, essays, articles and tales. Among these the most remarkable are certainly *Materada* (1960), *La ragazza di Petrovia* (1963) and *Il bosco di acacie* (1966), which came together to form the *Trilogia istriana*; the autobiographical novel *L’albero dei sogni*, which won the Viareggio Prize in 1969; and *La miglior vita*, which obtained the most important Italian literary prize, the Strega, in 1977. In these

works, Tomizza explored exile, troubled identities, borders and plurilinguism (besides Italian, he frequently employed Croatian and Slovene and their dialects), taking advantage of the Mitteleuropean influence, and above all the “Slav” literary heritage. This fact may have caused an obstacle to a wider awareness of his literary production, even though Tomizza should be acknowledged as one of the most remarkable authors of the European 20th century.

## A land of stone

Although Tomizza is an Istria-born author, he captures in the Karst some relevant similarities with his homeland, which allow him to explore the subtler aspects of the area. Leaving aside the essays which touch upon the stony plateau behind Trieste, there are at least the novels *L’amicizia* and *Franziska*, but also the short story *La casa in campagna* within the collection *Dove tornare*, which deal with the most typical features of a land placed at the intersection of different civilizations. But what attracts Tomizza to the Karst is also its powerful natural landscape, comprised of pine forests and cliffs, sporadic winds which shatter everything, stones, valleys called *doline* (from the Slovene “dolina” which means “dale”), and caves. Against a background of this kind, human lives have historically settled down, sometimes struggling to reach the wellness of more fertile locations. Nevertheless, in these quiet surroundings Tomizza found



The Monrupino fortress functions as a cultural events during summer. From here one can admire panoramic views of the Gulf of Trieste and the villages of nearby Slovenia. Photograph by Massimo Crivellari (POR FESR 2007 - 2013), Archivio Turismo FVG.

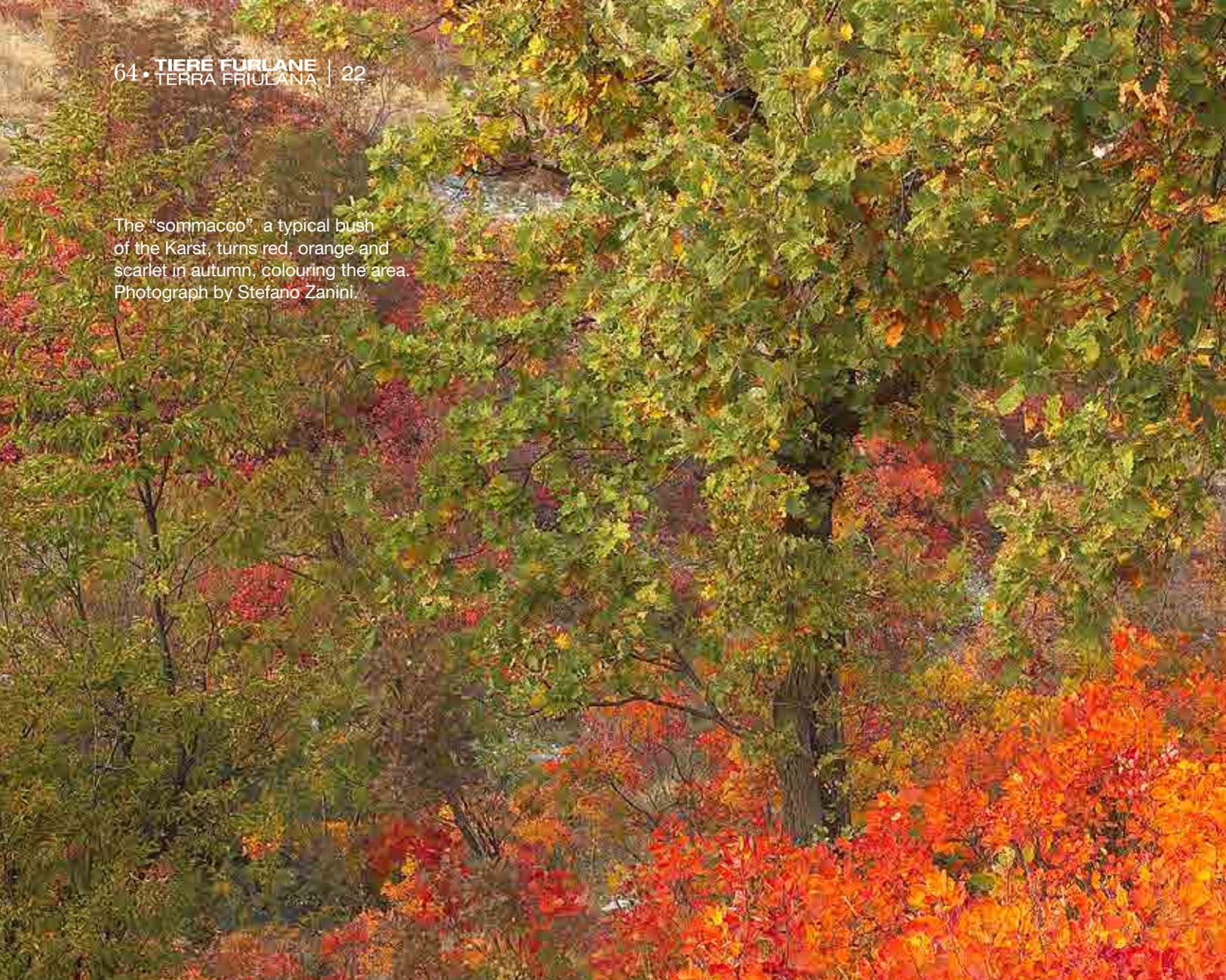
“something” that Trieste was not able to offer him. As Lorenzo Mondo, one of the reviewers of *L'amicizia*, underlines: “When Tomizza climbs into the Karst, his page breeds also stylistically, he breaks up the narrow and unpleasant atmosphere of the city, its small businesses. Up there, on the other hand, there is the cyclic immutability of the ground, the rests of a reluctant and secluded civilization, the presence of the minority of the Slavic brothers, a geographic ideal extension of the lost Istrian country of origin” (Mondo 1980, 13). One of the most significant passages in which Tomizza delves into the Karst's dimension is given at the beginning of the short story *La casa di campagna*, where an “attack of restlessness” drives the first-person narrator up to the plateau: “Above Trieste, as you know, lies the Karst: an arid land, wood, stone, scrub, that still employs its fascination, above all on Triestine

people who identify themselves considering it the spontaneous lengthening and the ideal opposition to their city. The Karst coincides with precipitous slope, in a mixture of cottages and stony houses, of pergolas and brambles, hard white rocks and crumbled plates of sandstones. For them it perhaps corresponds also to the open and strong sea or, to a fantastic landscape, which is the most living and easy background” (Tomizza 1974, 135). The sketches of the Karst outlined in this story are fully developed in the novel *L'amicizia*, where the writer describes in depth a “genuine small rural civilization” (Tomizza 1980, 142). In the story of Marco and Alessandro, characters cover an extended series of villages of the Karst – Basovizza, Padriciano, Trebiciano, Monrupino, Zolla, Sgonico, Gabrovizza, Sales, Samatorza, Tarnova piccolo, San Pelagio, Aurisina and Sistiana,



### SFOGLIATE DI CREMA

The “sfogliata di crema”, also called *sfoiada*, *zabata* or *carsolina*, is a delicious sweet that should be served with a sweet wine. The ingredients are the typical products of the Karst: eggs, flour, milk, cream, powdered sugar and white wine (possibly sweet wine) or rum. The recipe is the following: whip 4 fresh eggs with 180g of caster sugar; then add 100g of sifted flour, a pinch of salt and slowly 600 ml of milk. All should be cooked in a bain-marie until it boils. It should then be removed from the fire and 35g of butter added, along with two spoons of sweet white wine. The mixture is cooked again in a bain-marie in order for the cream to thicken. Meanwhile three rectangular dough should be baked in an oven at 180°C. When the cream is lukewarm, add it gently to the whipped cream. The “sfogliata di crema” should be made by overlaying one dough over the other and inserting the cream in-between. The last dough is sprinkled with powdered sugar. The ideal decoration would be a branch of juniper or leaves of “sommacco”.



The “sommacco”, a typical bush of the Karst, turns red, orange and scarlet in autumn, colouring the area. Photograph by Stefano Zanini.

letting the most remarkable traditional and rural features emerge. By passing through the crest which lies beyond the Gulf of Trieste, characters approach the upland, leaving behind the sea. The latter may appear and disappear unexpectedly to a “carsolino” [the name indicates the inhabitants of the Karst], according to the morphology of the land; in any case, when it comes into view, it represents the background behind a cliff or greenery. The scrub dominates the landscape of the Karst, even though plants and shrubs

often struggle to make space for themselves among stones, which are the real protagonists up there. The ground of the Karst is mainly made up of stones, whose shape and size do not repeat twice: they are small and stacked, or composed in never-ending slabs. The same pattern is also present in houses, which are often made of stones, and in roves: there are villages “with roves covered by slabs of grey stones” (Tomizza 1999, 27), as well as in small walls, which run along streets.

### **The sommacco**

The prevalence of this element does not nullify the relevance that should be attributed to the vegetation. In Tomizza’s words, greenery, which is “hardly able to exist among stones” (Tomizza 1999, 27), is in effect explored in detail. The writer describes one of the most characteristic plants, the “sommacco” or “scotano”, which can hardly be found in the surroundings. The “sommacco” (*Cotinus coggygria*) is a widespread species of flowering plant, but native to southern Europe, which expanded also in central



Asia and from the Himalayas to northern China. It is a bush that might form a small tree, whose oval leaves turn an intense red in autumn. It is in *Franziska* – the story of a girl from the Karst who falls in love with a lieutenant from Cremona, Nino Ferrari – that Tomizza pictures the best impressions of the “sommacco”. The girl minutely traces her sensations: “By moving forward towards the crest, humidity diminished, trees thinned out, the gloomy colour of the forest was replaced by lively dyes, inclined towards red and yellow. Soon after she found

herself between two intermittent espalier of *scotano*, while in the lane came out again the stone. How many times in her childhood she stretched out her hands towards the vermillion leaves, imagining them of fruiting plant, not different from the ones of the pear tree, of the apple tree, of the service tree, with its golden bunches... Then, by finding only tufts like wood on branches, she imagined that leaves themselves ripped by the sun were fruits. It was instead the result of what the arid Karst was able to offer after the peak of the summer season,

but so copious and varied, so enchanting to provide for the sterility of the barren stretch and transform it into a symbolic orchard of more Southern regions. Franziska could not resist from bending over the bush and pulling out a couple of branches particularly loaded with big stretched leaves, and placed them on the hollow part of the arm. They did not have any smell, apart from the zesty gummy of the plant; they were beautiful, pure fruitless appearance, like the totality of the Karst, like its own exalted and vain love” (Tomizza 1999, 205-6).

## The legend of the bora

It is inevitable that an atmospheric phenomenon like the bora has created many legends that tried to explain the origin of this cold wind. Among them there is that of Tergesteo, precursor of the city of Trieste, which says that... Once upon a time there was Eolus, father of winds, who went around the globe with his sons, Tramontane, Libeccio, Ostro, Scirocco, Greco, Mistral, Ponente and Levante, who had a sister called Bora. One day, by wandering freely over an upland, Bora looked at a cirrus and got lost. She found a shelter in the cave in which she saw also Tergesteo, the heroic Argonaut returning from the adventure of the Golden Fleece. The two fell in love immediately and this made Eolus upset. Bora was separated by her lover and cried. Her tears fall down becoming stones, while Tergesteo's blood – who was killed by Eolus – generated the plant of sommacco. Since then the Karst is an expanse of stones and sommacco and from time to time Bora blows with strength looking for her beloved Tergesteo.

## The bora

Like many other plants, such as pines, oaks, hawthorns, dog roses and cardoons, the “sommacco” should also find its space among stones and fight against a typical phenomenon of the area, the so-called “bora”, a violent cold wind which blows only occasionally reaching unbelievable speeds (up to 200 kilometres per hour). Although it can be felt over Dalmatia, Istria, the Slovenian Littoral, Trieste, and the rest of the Adriatic east coast, behind the Karst, in the Slovene area of Postojna, there is a rill from which the wind blows with intense strength, so much so that people block the shingles of roves with stones. The Karst is, therefore, hit by the “bora”, which is a wind generated by the contrast between the high-pressure regions of the hinterland and the warmer Adriatic. This wind can be divided into two categories, depending on the conditions of the weather: the “light bora” (“bora chiara”) and “dark bora” (“bora scura”), char-

acterized respectively by light or bad weather. According to Tomizza's characters, bora increases “the sense of fight” and causes a “tension all in the head that corresponds to a nerve excitement” (Tomizza 1980, 60).

The impact of bora and the sounds it makes in the Karst night have also been exploited by the Slovene poet Srečko Kosovel, born in Tomaj, just a few kilometres from the Italo-Slovene border. Here is the third part of his poem (*Kraška Vas*) *Karst Village*:

*The ocean of pines  
darkly murmurs.*

*The Adriatic curls into the  
shore,  
into darkness.*

*The burja hammers  
against the dead window.  
Night over the Karst village.*

*Who despairs?*

*Who laments  
that I may curse him  
in my sick hearth?*

*Who?  
(Kosovel 2010, 15)*

## A human landscape

Tomizza's Karst also contemplates other typical features concerning human life more directly. The landscape scene often leads to villages which are composed of houses, a church and its bell tower, an old lane which may still lead to a waterhole, old fences and crosses. These places have been built historically with local materials, such as stone and wood. Tomizza underlines that this blend was “a mixture of the far South and the closer Alpine regions burdened by the snow” (Tomizza 1980, 141). By entering villages, Tomizza's characters find peasants, who grow their own vegetables or breed livestock; winemakers and landlords. People here live in traditional houses and farms, where the stony facades complement the wooden interiors. Inside, wooden walls create intimacy, while old wardrobes, on which are placed bottles of oil and vinaigrette, as well as jars of syrup, jam and sauces, close the angles of a kitchen or a dining-room. In the traditional house, bedrooms have a bed, with a deep mattress, a wide walnut wood wardrobe and the porcelain basin and pitcher for toilette. Outside, the traditional house still offers the so-called “ognjišče”, a conical room for the fireplace leaning against the walls. Apart from creating a relaxing ambience, which historically was also used for heating, cooking and other domestic uses, the “ognjišče” gives the house a sense of warmth and friendliness that cannot be



The red soil covers the Karst's dips and depressions called "doline". It generates from the decomposition of calcareous stones, and its colour is due to ferric oxides present in the ground. It constitutes an ideal soil for vineyards, given that the latter are satisfied with simple conditions. Photograph by Massimo Crivellari (POR FESR 2007 - 2013), Archivio Turismo FVG.

compared to standard radiators. Indeed, the house of the Karst preserves old items and traditions that are nowadays lost in cities like Trieste.

### The osmizza

The same level of intimacy is offered by the "osmizza", described by Tomizza in the village of Samatorza, which smells of hay in the spring. The "osmizza" is an informal eating place where products, such as meat, cheese and wine, are homemade and provided directly by local farmers. The name "osmizza" has a significant etymology, given that it derives from the Slovene number eight, "osem", indicating the number of days that Maria Theresa of Austria allowed the venue to stay open. The sovereign imposed only one rule to farmers who wanted to sell their own products in the area: to mark venues by a clear

sign that was a hanging "frasca" (a branch of tree) placed outside. In Tomizza's words, it "was an authentic osmizza with tables below the pergola and the wine cellar opened to the customers, who wanted to taste wine directly from barrels. Benches were occupied by a group of workers dressed with a blue overall, probably occupied by a work of excavation in the surroundings, two complete families who arranged a meeting after a walk in the forest, where women and children had picked up bunches of primrose. The waiter was a tall and skinny woman, with big light eyes and gristly hairs; she probably was at her first experience because entertained with everyone as if they were invited and bought as gifts from the kitchen slices of pandolce, hard-boiled eggs, plates with bacon in order to prevent wine from making them drunk" (Tomizza 1980, 144).



The "frasca" (a branch of tree) placed outside the "osmizza". Maria Theresa of Austria imposed only one rule to farmers who wanted to sell their own products in the area: to mark venues by a clear sign, that was an hanging "frasca" placed outside. Photograph by Massimo Crivellari (POR FESR 2007 - 2013), Archivio Turismo FVG.

In the "osmizza", there is also the wine cellar, where is possible to taste the dark wine, which here is called "vino nero" (in Italian it would have been red wine, but the Slovene linguistic contamination drove inhabitants of the area to call it black wine). When the host illuminates the wine cellar, the "hearth" of the venue is described as follows: "It was a cellar of a wealthy family, equipped and well-maintained: barrels in decreasing order with varnished circles, the taps which did not lose a drop; on the opposing wall there were the press, the grind, a line of overturned demijohn (...) The man leaked from the last small barrel of rosato wine, raised it towards the light and offered it to me. A bit sparkling, barely zesty, went down giving me a euphoric burst of heat. It reminded me of the first grape harvest of a new vineyard that my father had plant-

ed at home” (Tomizza 1980, 146). The wine tasted is the local Terrano, the colour of which is so concentrated it is called “blood of Karst”. Terrano should grow on the “terra rossa” – red ground, which is typical both in the Karst and in Istria; it is a dense juicy wine with a unique flavour reminiscent of forest berries. Nevertheless, Terrano is a wine that does not age well and should be used within a reasonable time, usually one year. There is also another typical Slovene (but also Balkan, Central and Eastern European) drink, which is widely popular in the area: the “slivovitz”, a strong alcoholic beverage made from plums, which may correspond to a plum brandy.

### Home-made food

Food is another key aspect touched on by Tomizza’s novel *L’amicizia*. Among the typical dishes of the Karst, Tomizza, who already mentioned the “kitchen slices of pandolce, hard-boiled eggs, plates with bacon” (Tomizza 1980, 144), also introduces the gnocchi of turkey with peas and the ham meatballs: “Gnocchi, big and soft, were offered in their domestic decoration achieved by the grater, while the backside offered a scar left by a finger for the sauce to fill in. The turkey, raised in the pasture, had golden and soft meat, penetrated with the flavour of sage and rosemary dipped in white wine; cooks widely used parsley in making the ham meatballs. My mother-in-law, who was expert in cooking, admired especially the

quality of products which were not passed through shops and fridges. In particular, she appreciated the green peas of the Karst, as they were consumed whole and dressed by the small squares of bacon, which were also homemade. Even more satisfied was the professor with his lasagna, in which he found a flavour of Low Sunday, convinced that also the butter tasted of herbs and flowers of the Karst” (Tomizza 1980, 194).

Tomizza’s cuisine of the Karst also includes dishes such as “pasta e fagioli” (pasta and beans), “salsicce con crauti” (sausages and sauerkraut), and sweets: the homemade “strudel” and the “sfogliate di crema” (cream pastries), revealing not only a strong Slovene influence but also an Austrian legacy. For instance, the strudel, which is a layered pastry with a filling of sour cherry or sweet cherry, or plum, poppy seed and sometimes also cheese, is a traditional sweet widespread throughout the Habsburg Empire. Also sauerkrauts, which corresponds to cut fermented cabbages with a remarkable sour flavour, are used as a condiment with various foods in Germanic and Slavic countries. In Germany it is served as a side dish for pork, sausage or bacon; in Russia it is a fundamental ingredient for a traditional soup (“shchi”); and in Serbia it is used to prepare “sarma” rolls for occasions like Orthodox Christmas, New Year, Easter etc., which are made of sauerkraut leaves, ground meat, rice and seasonings. In this sense, Tomizza’s Karst seems to open towards new horizons.

### A blend of cultures

Alongside its natural landscape and traditional villages, the Karst truly attracts Tomizza for its blend of cultures and languages, which materializes in characters like Boris, a young man “with dark complexion, strong traits and fair eyes” which was “for sure Italian and Slav” and seemed to have found the perfect balance (Tomizza 1980, 190). By describing people, cuisine, landscape and architecture, Tomizza always sought to find this blend, especially given that it failed to exist in his native land. In other words, the Karst offered him the chance to keep his auspices of peace and conciliation alive.

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Luca MANFÈ

# Friuli Venezia Giulia, a hidden treasure

Friuli is well known all over the world for its great white wine (Ronchi di Manzano).

# W

When I first moved to the States, 12 years ago, when people asked me where was I from I always had to say: "Near Venice" because no one knew where Friuli was and it took me too long to explain.

I was 22 years old and I was working as a waiter in Disney World, in Florida. We had customers from all over America, many of whom traveled a lot around Italy: Florence, Milan, Rome, Venice, the Amalfi coast, but nobody ever mentioned Friuli.

Once in a while I would get some-

one who was or had some relatives in the Army or Air Force and they knew of my hometown Aviano. They didn't know Aviano, they just knew that it was home for a United States Air Force base. Now things have changed for me. I have been away from my country for more than 12 years and I want people to know where I come from. Whenever people ask me: "Where are you from?" I always say: Friuli.

Right after winning 'Masterchef', when I was interviewed in magazines and TV, I felt it was my duty

to help my beautiful region to get the recognition it deserves. I embraced with all my heart the role of Ambassador of Friuli in the United States.

Friuli Venezia Giulia is a part of Italy with lots of history because it is situated in a very strategic part of Europe. It has easy and fast access to Eastern Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Northern Africa and the Mediterranean. For this reason, the Romans made of the city of Aquileia, in the province of Udine, one of the most important ports of their Empire.



Palmanova, plan taken from an old print. This is a fortress town known also from its rather unusual plan as "the star-shaped town" (*la Città Stellata*). It was, in fact, founded in 1593 as a defense post on the frontiers towards Austria and its shape is perfectly symmetrical with nine points and a spacious square from which six streets radiate outwards. From Lugani, V. (ed.), *Friuli Venezia Giulia*, Aristeia, Milano, 1978.

Throughout the years Friuli was invaded by Romans, barbarians, Venetians, the Austrian and Hungarian kingdom, and even Napoleon. Every era had a great impact in Friuli's territory and architecture. There is proof every time you drive around. I get fascinated when I walk around Cividale del Friuli where ruins of the city first built in 50BC can be found all over or driving into Palmanova and its star-shaped fort built in the Late Renaissance. There is a lot to see in Friuli and a lot to learn, but what excites me the most about my beautiful region is obviously food and wine. Friuli Venezia Giulia offers almost every type of food you can think of. It is

situated in the Adriatic coast so we get plenty of seafood, but at the north it borders the beautiful Alps, so we get everything the mountains can offer. Driving from the sea to the Alps, from Trieste to Tarvisio, you have a wonderful sequence of different

*Cjalçons* are a feast day dish in Carnia. They are made in a wide range of styles, from the sweetish to the sharply penetrating, and every recipe is a family secret. Photograph by Ulderica da Pozzo (POR FESR 2007 - 2013), Archivio Turismo FVG.

scenarios: from the valleys to the mountains, you'll see fields, farms and wineries, lots of wineries. Friuli is well known all over the world for its great white wine, the best in the world with some of the oldest vineyards and oldest producers in the world. Red wines are very good as well, maybe not as competitive as Tuscany or Piedmont, but we surely defend ourselves. Not many people know, that the first plants of Cabernet Sauvignon planted in California came from Friuli! When I go out for dinner I only order wines from Friuli because "I like to help the economy", but mostly because it makes me feel at home.

I love to go back to Friuli. My favorite thing to do when I am there is eating. I like to find the most rustic and traditional places, better if family owned where things are still done the old way. Back in the days, most families were farmers with animals and fields so Friulan cuisine is made of very poor – yet delicious ingredients. I always look for restaurants or *ostariis* that serve the best *Frico*, a staple of Friulan cuisine made with Montasio



cheese, onions and potatoes. So simple, but so incredibly delicious. I never go out to fancy restaurants when I am there, I get those here in NY. But nowhere in the world can I find food the way it's prepared back at home, not even in my kitchen.

For me, at least one dinner in San Daniele del Friuli to have the best Prosciutto in the world, is a must, because even if you can find prosciutto everywhere, it will never taste like back at home.

Then I walk in some of the local bars of the town where I grew up, where the older fellows play cards. Those bars where everybody knows each other, until I walk in.

They all speak the old *Friulano* language. I try to keep up with tradition, always finding a way to speak it with family and friends, but it is not like when I used to live there.

It is always the same scene: someone standing at the bar next to me would ask: "WHO are you from?" and after giving them a detailed explanation of my family tree, 3 or 4 of them would go: "Aaaaaah, you are the American!!!!". I love it! It never gets old.

I love America and I feel very fortunate to have a wonderful life and family here in the States, but I like to spend time in Friuli because there is nothing like home.

At the north Friuli borders the beautiful Alps, so we get everything the mountains can offer. Photograph by Ulderica da Pozzo (POR FESR 2007 - 2013), Archivio Turismo FVG.



Daniele ČOTAR

# Montasio cheese

## a Friulian story

T

The transformation of milk into Montasio cheese is closely tied to the history of the mountain pastures, where animals were taken to graze during the warm summer months. Individual farmers put their cattle together to form larger herds, and the long distances from the hamlets and villages in the valleys meant that right from the earliest days the alpine herdsmen had to master the difficult technique of cheese-making as the only way of preserving the valuable milk with its exceptionally short storage time. Gradually, improvements in the cheese-making methods were

made. The herdsmen learnt how to prepare the rennet to enable the cheese to form, and developed sophisticated techniques of using fire to ensure that the first curds became drier and more solid, so as to form a cheese able to tolerate an extended period of ripening.

The special device – the *mussa* (a nickname meaning jenny), still used in the mountain pastures – was a simple yet ingenious way of bringing the cauldron nearer to or farther from the heat. To give the cheese its regular shape, expert hands were able to mould beechwood into perfect hoops which

were then filled with the cheese curds and weighted down.

In this way, the cheese which was to become known as Montasio took shape, with forms some 30 cm in diameter and 8 cm high. These dimensions, which grew up and became the standard purely through tradition, have become one of the basic characteristics of Montasio cheese, and by which it can be readily identified. The quantity of cheese per form was perfect for the rather modest daily production of milk from an average pasture and such a round could also be carried with relative ease down the mountain tracks to

These is Montasio grazing land. Cheese production on this mountain is documented since Middle Ages, and is still carried on, for hikers' delight.

the valley below in the traditional *cos* (i.e. pack basket).

But the shape and volume of each cheese form took on further significance. It regulated the contact of the cheese with the air, and thus the ripening process. By happy chance the dimensions and surface area of each form led to relatively quick ripening and facilitated long-term storage without an excessive loss of weight. It was a cheese with a human dimension.

The summer pastures were widespread among the high Alps of north-east Italy right from the earliest records. Those below the

massive outcrop of the mountain Montasio had already been named in 1259 as part of the feudal lands of Benedictine monastery of Moggiò, in the Fella valley. The valleys of Friuli and Carnia and the watershed of the Isonzo all converge around the massif of Montasio. It was an area of dynamism and growth, of iron ore, woodland and rich pastures. Some of the earliest workshops for metal and wood-working were established here, largely to supply the herdsmen in the alpine pastures with the tools and equipment they needed to prepare their cheese. The technology and tools developed rapidly.



In this fresco (Villa Capellani, Fraelacco UD), three amorini can be seen: one milking (in the background), one pouring milk cream (on the right). In the centre the third one is making butter with a churn, a typical "zangola", used in Friuli until not so long ago. Photograph by Loris Peverè.

The whisk used to break up the initial curds was perfected from the original thin pine branch with carefully cut side-twigs. The curds were stirred with special wooden ladles, and later a thin wire “lyre” was used to cut the milk solids more precisely.

The evening’s milk was kept cool in copper churns. In the alpine pastures, the cheese was a source of income and even wealth. The well-ordered and extensive pastures were the cause of many conflicts between those who would exploit them. Throughout the 16th century repeated struggles between Tarvisio and the Counts of Prampero are recorded in the Montasio area.

People recognised in cheese a foodstuff of vital importance – healthy, tasty and nutritious, and many learnt to make it alone with what little equipment a peasant needed or could afford.

In an article of 1885 we can read: “It is called Montasio – after the mountain of the same name where it was first made, although it is widespread in all the pastures and even produced in some of the villages”.

## Dairies

The need to have cheese always readily available in the home did not fit well with the limited production capabilities of the time, so towards the end of the 18th century the so-called “Dairy Companies” were formed in the Osoppo area by the captain of the militia of the Counts Savorgnan. This was a type of basic association able to offer



The spread of co-operative dairies in 1911. As can be seen, the maximum concentration of these co-operatives for milk processing was in the mountains (Carnia), in the morainic hills and in the High Plain. From the weekly *L'amico del contadino* (The Farmer's Friend), n. 6, 1911.

certain advantages to the peasants, who soon welcomed the idea. The milk producers in a local area put their milk together, so one member therefore had enough for cheese making. In the following days, he gave his milk to the others, until he had returned everything that had been lent to him, and so on. This simple “shift” system still operates in some Friulian dairies.

After a visit to the family dairies of Osoppo, Prof. Giuseppe Sartori of the Scuola Agraria in Brescia wrote in a report in the Autumn of 1897: “I was impressed to see the care taken of the houses, and the great regard they have for milk. It is stored in the very best parts of their homes”.

The move from these domestic, peripatetic “dairies” to what we can recognise as a true cheese-making dairy was not long in coming. The idea of a purpose-built space for all the milk producers of the area, with equipment owned by the co-operative and employing a specialist cheese-maker grew up towards the end of the 19th century. In Carnia, in a small village at the foot of Mt Coglians, Collina di Forni Avoltri, a co-operative society for cheese production was founded on 15th April 1880. The first dairy in Friuli began to operate in 1881, with immediate success. In 1882, the idea was copied in the villages of Fanna and



The pride of those who know that they have done a good job for their own community can be seen on the faces of the founders of the social dairy of Tricesimo. The cow that peeks out on the right hand side is deservedly captured in the picture: it should take the credit too. Photograph by Sante Gerussi.

Forni Avoltri, and in the following year five more were established, including the first in the foothills and on the plain. The spread of the co-operative dairies ("latterie sociali") was little short of miraculous, and before the end of the century there were already 200 throughout Friuli.

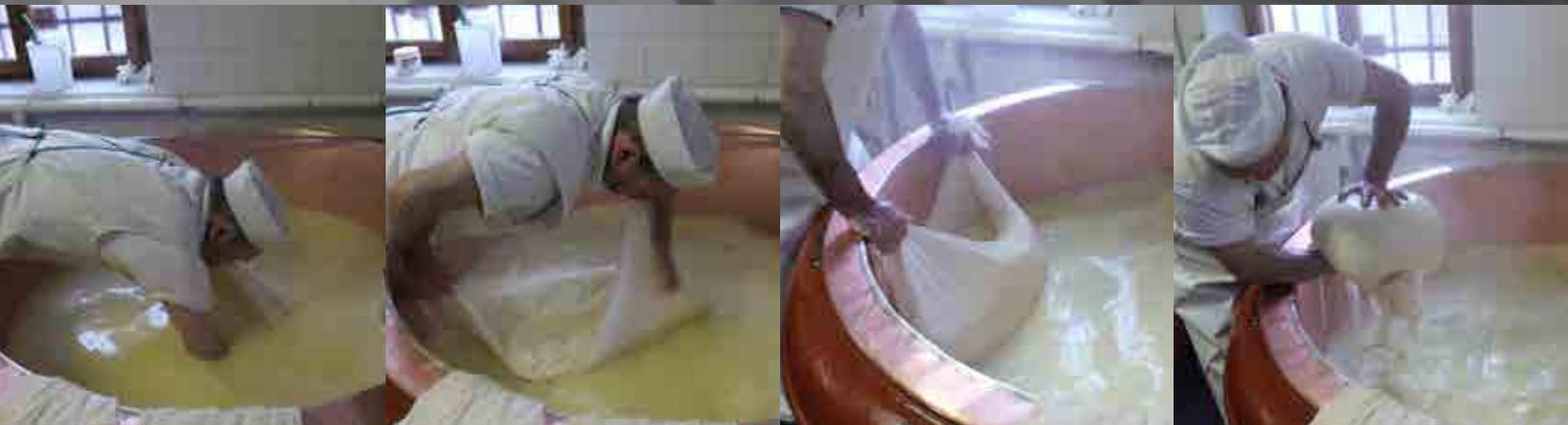
Such dairies were built at great expense to the members, but always with the correct equipment and suitable space to carry out all the different stages of production involved in the storage and transformation of the milk, and then the salting and storage of the cheese itself. The dairy was often the most beautiful building in the village, and a source of pride to all.

The milk to be made into cheese was a blend of two milkings.

That of the evening was taken immediately to the dairy, where the cheese-maker weighed it and made a note in the member's book. The milk was then poured into shallow dishes standing on a long stone counter in the store-room. During warmer periods, water was allowed to flow along the counter throughout the night in order to keep the milk cool. On the plains, however, cheese-makers preferred taller, narrower basins placed next to each other in a stream of flowing water. The milk matured slightly overnight, and the cream began to form. Through cooling and slight skimming it was possible to bring the milk to the correct chemical and microbiological balance for cheese making.

Early in the morning, the milk was

put into the cauldron where the morning's fresh milk was added gradually, as each family brought their contribution to the dairy. The fire, built from wood supplied by each member in turn, was lit and the milk heated. A trolley enabled the cauldron to be moved nearer to or away from the fire to regulate the heating process. It was now that the transformation began. The cheese-maker brought the milk to a temperature of 33° C, stirring it constantly. He prepared the rennet, mixed it with water, added it to the warm milk and then stopped stirring. Rennet is an enzyme extracted from animals and used to solidify the milk curds. Once it has been added, the process cannot be halted and leads inexorably to the creation of Montasio cheese.



Under the effect of the rennet, casein, the most important protein in milk, builds up a delicate net and binds together all the ingredients of the milk. Slowly, over 20-30 minutes, the milk changes from a liquid into a shiny elastic gelatine.

As the curds slowly coalesced, the cheese-maker was careful to ensure it was not disturbed in any way and the great cauldron was covered with a wooden lid. When it had reached the right consistency and texture, the mixture was carefully broken up using the lyre. After first making the sign of the cross in the centre as a symbol of good portent, the cheese-maker methodically passed the lyre through the curds and then gently stirred with a large flat spatula. Finally, the lyre was used again to further break up the milk solids, this whole process taking some ten minutes. The whey separated from the curds, and ever-larger milk solids were formed. It was important to continue stirring so the solids – initially only the size of grains of rice – did not sink to the bottom. Everything was then heated again, this

time to a temperature of 45° C. This temperature was perfect to encourage the development of milk enzymes, and when it had been reached, the heat was again removed. The solids hardened, and the cheese became drier. The optimum condition and balance of these grains, the curds and the whey, was judged by the experienced hands and eye of the cheese-maker, who ceased stirring at this point to allow the pieces of soon-to-be Montasio cheese to settle. Up to this point, the whole process since the addition of the rennet had taken about two hours.

After being allowed to rest, and so absorbing more of the milk's microflora the now-larger pieces of newly-formed cheese were scooped out with a linen cloth, brought to the marble work-top and pressed into the traditional round forms. During this initial stage of storage, the cheese was regularly turned over to guarantee the uniformity of the rind. And, since the cheese was still warm, valuable micro-organisms continued to form, some of which created small quantities of gas which led to the creation

In a small dairy the newly-formed cheese is scooped out with a linen cloth (Brazzacco).

of spherical “holes” within the cheese, giving Montasio its traditional appearance with the so-called “partridge eyes” inside the cheese itself. Salting and appropriate maturing completed the process.

The cheese-making dairy was full of noise from the machines, so you had to shout to be heard. A pump extracted the whey from the cauldron and took it to the centrifuge to be skimmed. This was a way of saving some of the milk-fat left in the whey, and was added to the cream from the surface of the evening's milking to be churned into butter.

All the machinery was driven by a series of pulleys coming from a central axle which supplied the power. Towards mid-day, most of the work was finished, and all that was left to do was clean the dairy and turn the cheeses one final time for the day. The dairy was closed, and silence reigned.



The cheese-making dairy was full of noise from the machines. Photograph by Tarcisio Baldassi, 1945.



All the machinery was driven by a series of pulleys coming from a central axle which supplied the power.

### **Further growth and development**

The production of Montasio cheese spread to every corner of Friuli, and even to some areas of the Veneto Alps. The production unit was still the co-operative dairy at the local level, and in the 1950s there were more than 600 of them. But the 1970s brought rapid change to the Italian agricultural system and the traditional ways began to disappear. Fields of hybrid maize replaced pastures and meadows, fewer cattle were bred, but for higher milk yields. Even the characteristics of the milk itself changed with techniques to alter the balance of the microflora, and the dairies had to adapt to the new conditions. New equipment replaced some of the more laborious of the traditional ways, such as laying the dishes of milk along the cool counter, or filling the cauldron.

In the modern dairy, milk was weighed more quickly and automatically sent to the churns, from which specially designed

## RAZZA FRIULANA



The pride for the “latteria turnaria” (rotating dairy) can be seen both in the cow and in the well structured girl (due to the nutritional improvement achieved thanks to the diffusion of cheese in daily diet). In the beginning of 20th century a motto was common: “Every bell tower, a dairy”. And, to be sincere, in the Fifties of last century, such dairies amounted to more than 600. This is a vignette of Friulian life by Emilio Caucigh.

pumps transferred the evening’s milk into raised steel tanks. Cooling water flowed through the double base of these tanks and the cream drained off. In the morning, the milk was syphoned away – milk now containing spontaneously developing microflora. But who was to guarantee that those useful for making quality Montasio cheese would develop in greater numbers than the others? That the less important (for cheese making) would not displace the vital ones?

The first silage was fed to cattle. Production demands became more and more urgent. That same countryside was still relatively unsettled, and who knows what kind of unwelcome bacteria could have found their way into the milk.

It was at this point that “lattoinnesto” (lactic leaven) was introduced as a primer. A natural technique, its use slowly spread from dairy to dairy, and it is still used today, especially in the smaller ones. The cheese-maker selects and sets aside a small quantity of milk from several different farms which could probably guarantee a high production quality. The guarantee is not 100%, but it is well known that the most precious things in life are only won by taking risks. The milk is heated because the live bacilli love warmth. When the primer is ready, the cheese-maker halts the fermentation by cooling the liquid and storing it until needed. The initial reaction produces some 200-300 million live bacilli per gram of primer. They are mightily virile, and when introduced into the cauldron, stimulate the fermentation process. The microflora produced by the primer are unique to the environment they come from. It works like the finest scion grafted onto a wild stock. The grafting leads to the growth of quality fruit – the collaboration with the basest root gives rise to a high-quality product.

The work then proceeds in the traditional manner, using only

rennet and fire. The double-bottomed boilers fed by a steam generator have replaced direct heat. This method ensures that heating is more easily controlled and that there are more hygienic operating conditions. Some cheese-makers still use a special gauge to check exactly when to halt the fermentation process in the boiler. Nowadays, pneumatic presses weigh down the forms, and a stronger metal hoop has replaced the traditional muslin cloth.

With these moulds, the Montasio takes on its regular 8cm x 30 or 35cm shape. All around the circumference of the cheese, the mould etches the name “Montasio” into the side, along with the other information required by law: the dairy’s code number, the provincial code, and the date of production. Forms of freshly made Montasio cheese contain millions of microscopic creatures competing with one another to give its unique flavour and aroma. The following morning when the forms are taken out of the moulds, the cheese is then immersed in brine to halt the fermentation process. The brine is of a controlled concentration and kept in great vats under cool conditions in a special room, the “salatoio”. Nowadays, these salting rooms are cooled and temperature-controlled, so the process takes place under ideal conditions. Osmosis forces the salt deep into the cheese so the fermentation process slows. As well as regulating the bacterial



The warehouse of Vivaro dairy in the 1930s.

activity, the salt forces out any superfluous whey from the curd, sets the rind and gives flavour to the cheese. After a day under the brine, the salting procedure is completed in the dry salting room. The cheese forms are laid on benches and sprinkled with salt. Two days later they are turned and the salting is repeated on the other side. The process is repeated a couple of times to ensure the correct salt-balance and flavour.

Now the cheese passes to the ripening room where it is kept under carefully controlled conditions to allow it to ripen and mature naturally. Maturing is an essential process for hard cheese. These are cheeses containing low levels of humidity, and the complex transformations taking place within the cheese do so very slowly. The flavour of cheese only begins to develop after two or three months of storage. The various groups of microbes have con-

tinued to live within the cheese and have been working hard. The changes are so profound that the taste of the milk has completely disappeared.

Once the ripening process is complete, the Montasio cheese is put on sale. Nowadays, many dairies offer their produce to customers through their own well-appointed outlets. Here we can find young Montasio that is only 60 days old and still full of those live bacilli which are so beneficial to man. With cheese ripened for several months and cheese matured for over a year, the flavour becomes increasingly rich, the number of live bacilli decreases and the Montasio develops other virtues. New organic substances, new proteins, new vitamins and new flavours are created within the cheese. Everything is concentrated into a smaller volume with greater nutritional value.

There are the noble proteins with all the indispensable amino acids,



### Features an expert consumer should recognize

Taking into consideration its production techniques, Montasio is a cheese that highlights the features of the production which is delicate and respects the bacteriological and microbiological factors of the milk. The flavour and the quality are that of a soft and delicate tasting cheese, that isn't extreme or shocking in taste and smell.

The three classic ageing stages of Montasio help appreciate the characteristics that gradually evolve:

- the fresh Montasio (from 60 days to 5 months of ageing) embodies the taste of the great alpine cheeses with particularly soft and delicate flavours. Upon close examination, we find an elastic structure and regular holes throughout, a not too excessive, but pleasant perfume and a harmonious flavour.

- the Montasio "mezzano" (aged 5 to 12 months) has a particular full taste characterized by a unique strong flavour, typical of natural products. The structure becomes more crumbly, but maintains a good consistency. The colour of the cheese tends towards straw-yellow and the rind gets thicker. The aroma becomes significant and marked by the purity of the product.

- the "aged" Montasio (aged more than 12 months) version has characteristics that are generally not found in other cheeses. The structure becomes more crumbly and the holes less important. The colour of the cheese becomes yellowish and the rind takes on a light-brown colour. The flavour becomes pleasantly sharp without ever becoming irritating or awkward to the palate. Excellent eaten grated on pasta or vegetable soups. Eaten directly in slices, it becomes an excellent pairing for polenta and with superior meat.

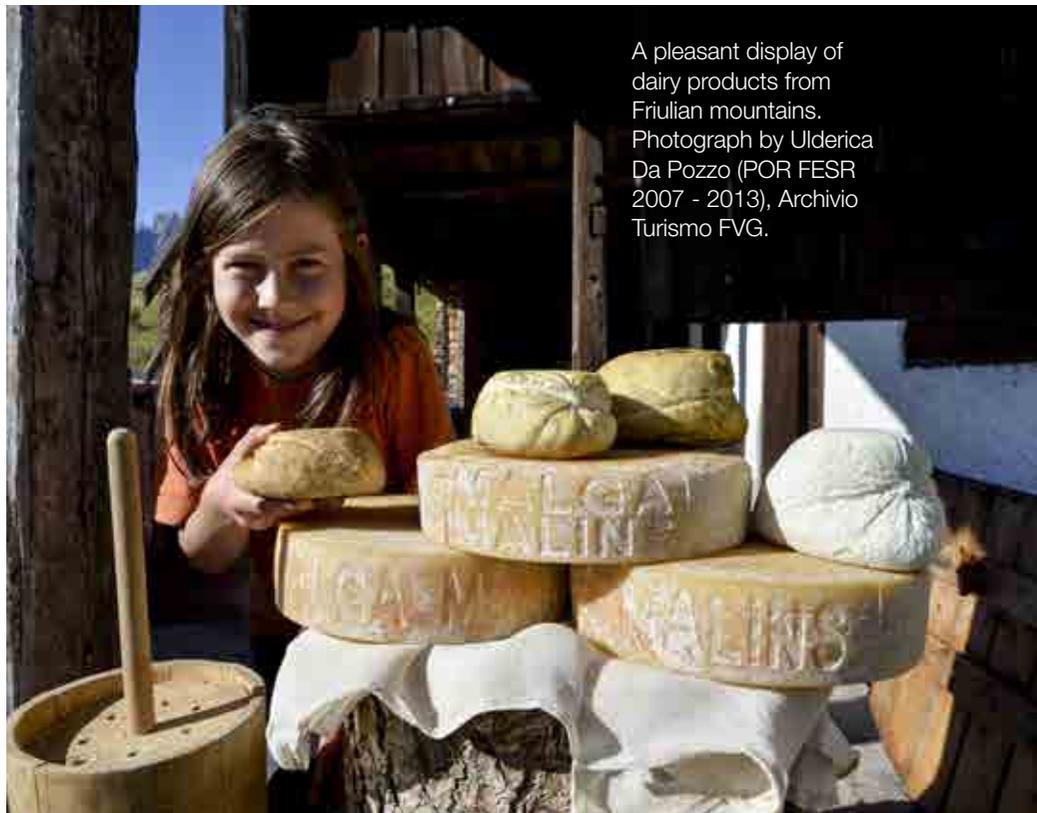


Nowadays, only a few of the six hundred co-operative dairies running in the 50s still exist. Their premises serve a different purpose, and the former one is at times indicated by a plaque or, such as in this case, a tile. Locals do not forget that, for longer than a century, co-operative dairies set the path of the economy, the food habits and the daily life of all villages in Friuli.

the important vitamins A and D, calcium and phosphorus, and the whole is easily digestible – these are the characteristics which make Montasio such a healthy and complete foodstuff.

Through these complex biological changes, we can say that the basic material is reborn as a completely new foodstuff. Changes so very delicate that man has been learning to control them since olden times. He has done so with simple means, with salt, fire, water, and air. These technologies demand and enhance man's capabilities, and the results are the highest expression of the culinary art.

This article is excerpted from the book *Montasio, una storia da raccontare* (Eurocommunication, 2002). *Tiere furlane* thanks the editor Guido De Zorzi.



A pleasant display of dairy products from Friulian mountains. Photograph by Ulderica Da Pozzo (POR FESR 2007 - 2013), Archivio Turismo FVG.

### Some numbers about dairy sector in Friuli Venezia Giulia

In our region there are some 45,000 dairy cows, whose milk production is in the region of 270,000 tonnes per year. Most of that (210,000 tons) is transformed into cheese. 32,200 tonnes of milk are transformed into Montasio cheese, with an annual production of 3,550 tonnes (480,000 wheels). Among other cheese products, "Latteria" cheese, whose production is similar to Montasio one, prevails with 9,500 tonnes, followed by soft cheeses and pulled curd cheeses, totalling 7,000 tonnes.

The biggest dairy plants, processing more than 30 tonnes of milk per day, are 4. They receive the 55% of milk intended to cheese making, and are accountable for 30% of Montasio production.

Other dairies, that could be called "average", deal with 3 to 30 tonnes/day, and receive the 38% of milk intended to cheese making, and produce 55% of Montasio.

Small dairies, working less than 3 tonnes/day, are 20, and give only 10% of overall Montasio production. But they still play a social role, and their cheese has, more often than not, superior distinctive features. Finally, we have to take into account 20 micro dairies, usually related to a single farm and family run, that deal with less than 1 tonne/day and produce the remaining 5% of Montasio cheese.

(Thanks to Nevio Toneatto, Consorzio per la tutela del formaggio Montasio)

# A precious leg

# A

## A bit of history

Just as the frequently-cited "olive-oil watershed" (marking the geographical extent of Mediterranean culture characterized by the cultivation and use of olive oil) actually exists, so too a similar anthropological and economic "map" can be drawn for air-cured ham.

In tracing this map, it will be discovered that ham is a factor of cultural, historical and economic unity right across continental Europe. Ham is made in the Iberian peninsula, in Italy, in France and in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The historical roots of ham pro-

duction can usually be traced to the growth of rural cultures located in the areas near Europe's great mountain ranges. Air-cured ham production – like pig farming itself and other related economic activities – is one of the most genuinely European food related activities.



San Daniele del Friuli. A vital element is the good air that prevails here, where the breezes that descend from the Alps meet those rising from the Adriatic, creating a microclimate where humidity and temperature are regulated by the morainic land and the waters of the Tagliamento, one of the last European rivers to preserve its original course.

In Italy, more or less renowned varieties of ham are to be found all around the country and above all in the lowlands flanking the river Po. "Padania" the macro-region lying between the Alps and the Apennines, is the true home of this economic phenomenon which brings together local fodder production, animal husbandry and production, linking them inextricably to pig farming and pig-related food products.

Padania's unique local features have been combined in a highly characteristic manufacturing process. In all the major areas of pork-based food production, superb-quality *Denominazione di origine protetta* (Protected Designation of Origin)-label products are available, thanks to the area's centuries-old tradition of pig breeding and related commercial, cultural and economic activities.

That is why we find mature air-cured hams in Piedmont, in Emilia at Parma and Modena, in the Berici and Euganean Hills (Veneto) and at San Daniele del Friuli (as well as in the Marche, Umbria and Tuscany).

While lowland economies developed the skill of pig farming, the hillsides were proving ideal for the air-dried curing of hams.

If we concentrate on San Daniele, after taking a panoramic sweep across Italy and the rest of Europe, we shall see at once why it proved to be the perfect place for air-curing ham.

The hill of San Daniele is of morainic origin. It is located at a



Maturation of Prosciutto di San Daniele must continue up until the end of the thirteenth month after the start of processing, under optimal temperature, humidity and ventilation conditions.



short distance from the first Pre-alpine slopes and overlooks the river Tagliamento.

Cold winds blow down on San Daniele from the North. On clear days, from the top of the hill you can see the Canal del Ferro, the valley which leads to Austria along the ancient Roman road. Warm breezes arrive from the Adriatic Sea, only 35 km away as the crow flies and also visible from the hill in good weather. Warm and cool airs are mix together as they travel along the course of the river, which acts as a conduit and natural "air conditioner".

The gravel soil which, being morainic, has excellent drainage properties and the gentle, but constant ventilation, are the ideal conditions for air-curing.

The Celts were well aware of this. It was the Celts who first made use of salt to conserve pork, which they consumed in large quantities and there is ample evidence of their presence in Friuli in pre-Roman times.

The culture of those same Celts has left its mark all over Padania. They were a relatively sedentary people, unwarlike and "agricultural" in outlook, who laid the foundations of the remarkable "rural" culture that the Romans were later not to interfere with, and indeed encourage, shaping it judiciously to their own ends with great success.

The most ancient settlement at San Daniele dates from the first century AD. It is a Roman "villa" built at the very top of this hill that has been crucial to every

important phase in San Daniele's history.

The Romans themselves were connoisseurs of ham. On the funeral stone of a butcher found at Portogruaro, we can make out the distinctive shape of a genuine San Daniele prosciutto, complete with trotter.

In short, the ancient inhabitants of San Daniele had discovered that the low humidity, excellent ventilation and Prealpine hillside climate were ideal for curing meat and indeed enhancing its flavour. They invented air-curing, a much more complex – and in some respects miraculous – procedure than simple preservation. Every stage of air-curing makes use of only absolutely natural processes, with the single (partial) exception of rubbing the ham with salt as a first step.

That is the reason why San Daniele, its hill rising out of the Friulian plain to form the last natural barrier before the Alps themselves, became famous for its ham. This is a legacy left by the magical wisdom of those early salters, the first people to appreciate San Daniele's microclimate.

### **From Myth to Market**

Centuries passed before San Daniele prosciutto production developed into a fully-fledged economic system.

Ham underwent a process of evolution from its original rural context to modern economic production.

Ham production began to reach economically significant pro-

portions in the 1920s, with the appearance of the first *prosciuttifici*, or ham factories.

These were specially designed spaces obtained by transforming the cellar of a domestic outhouse into an independent production unit.

This was also the time at which non-locally bred pigs were first used. Previously, the native black Friulian farmyard animals had been used, but now fresh hams began to arrive from Lombardy. By the end of the 1940s, the ham-making establishments had turned into full-scale business enterprises. Ham-making was an "industry".

And industry brought capital from outside the region with the pioneers of the current economic system.

The intermediate stages in the development of what was now destined to become a "production district" were reached at the end of the 1960s and the end of the 1980s, each stage marked by a doubling in the production capacity of San Daniele prosciutto. It was at the end of the 1960s that the companies which were to become household names all over Italy began their activities. During the 1980s, many larger, more sophisticated companies came onto the scene.

Most were established pork-product manufacturers, but there were also well-known multinational groups among the newcomers.

San Daniele prosciutto began to be marketed seriously in the



Prosciutto di San Daniele is recognisable at first sight, thanks to the distinguishing signs shown on each ham. In particular, the unmistakable Consortium seal branded onto the rind and the presence of the trotter.

1960s. Indeed, it is fair to say that some of the manufacturers in San Daniele helped to create a market for air-cured ham outside the area where the product was traditionally consumed.

Currently, the economic system based on Prosciutto di San Daniele has the following parameters:

- there are 31 producers;
- Prosciutto di San Daniele generates sales of about 330 million EUR (2014);
- Prosciutto di San Daniele accounts for 23% of Italy's consumption of air-dried cured ham (2014);
- Exports account for 13% of production (2014).

### The Route to Quality

The "historic" quality of Prosciutto di San Daniele is attested in surviving records and has no need of any further explanation. It is nonetheless remarkable that such a limited quantity of ham as was available until recently should have given rise to such a widespread and firmly-established reputation.

The quality of the product today is characterized by a number of features that deserve individual consideration.

First of all, Prosciutto di San Daniele is by definition a superior-quality food product, like all Italian *Denominazione di origine* ("designation of origin")-label hams.



In 1960s ham underwent a process of evolution from its original rural context to modern economic production. Courtesy Prosciuttificio Rino Bagatto.



Delivery of pork legs at the prosciuttificio (ham making factory), 1960s. Courtesy of Prosciuttificio DOK Dall'Ava.

In a sense, this takes us back to the subject of "historic" quality.

It should also be noted that:

- Prosciutto di San Daniele is still made today in the traditional manner. Ham making is a "historic" process rather than a "craft" skill. The term "craft" is relevant only if it refers to the scale of production and organization.
- words like "technology" and "innovation" are frequently used by Prosciutto di San Daniele producers, but they refer exclusively to company organization, goods handling and the other mechanical aspects of industrial life. The production "technique" itself is unchanged. Progress serves only to render the working environment and the tools of production more rational and more functional.

- Prosciutto di San Daniele is a "traditional" product because its taste and organoleptic properties are safeguarded and guaranteed by a traditional production process and the source of its raw material.

### Pigs

The pigs used for the preparation of San Daniele air-cured ham come from ten Italian regions, where they are born, bred and slaughtered (Friuli, Veneto, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Piedmont, Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, Lazio, Abruzzo).

Pigs must belong to traditional genotypes (Large White and Landrace breeds) and may be cross-bred with the Duroc breed or hybridized in other ways which must nevertheless comply with the requisites laid down in the

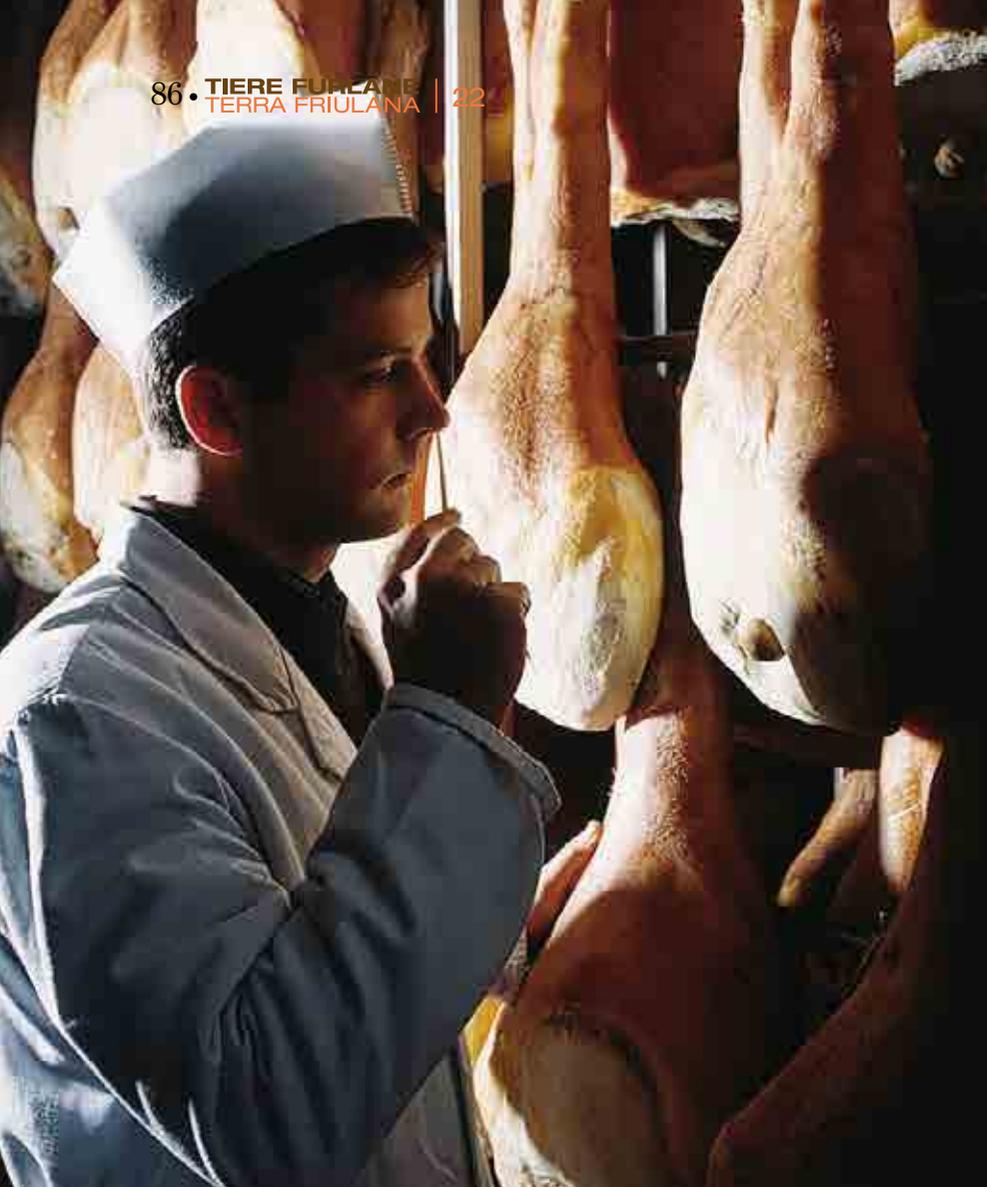
National Pedigree Register for "Italian heavy pigs".

A number of breeds are listed as unsuitable and the use of thighs from boars and sows is explicitly forbidden.

The pigs are reared in the traditional way (while providing all the essential requirements dictated by modern science to ensure functionality and the animal's well-being) and must be fed on the basis of a rigorously defined "diet" involving the specification of a series of permitted (or forbidden) feeds.

To ensure that the "production regulations" are observed, breeders must:

- brand piglets immediately after birth with a tattoo on both hind thighs identifying the breeder and the month of the animal's birth;



During maturation periodic checks are performed by means of 'puntatura', or piercing. This consists in inserting a horse-bone needle at five specific points, in order to check the progress of maturation and the quality of the prosciutto by means of the aroma

– certify the adult pig before slaughter (by adding another identification mark if the animal was fattened at a different stock breeder's from where it was born).

The above measures came into effect in August 1994. The first pigs slaughtered under the new procedure became available in May 1995 and the first hams with their own individual "identity card" were put on the market by the ham makers in June and July 1996.

### **Prosciutto di San Daniele**

Fresh pig thighs arrive at the ham maker's with all the relevant documents stamped by the breeder and by the abattoir.

A series of checks is carried out at the ham maker's premises to ensure that the pig thighs are suitable for ham making. Selection is severe (in 2012 8,2 % of the pig thighs supplied were rejected as unsuitable).

The abattoir mark is removed from fresh pig thighs rejected as unsuitable, so that there is no

temptation to resubmit them for processing and the pig thighs that pass inspection are branded with a mark that, together with the DOT symbol (at last!), bears the date on which ham-making operations started (day, month and year). And so begins the process of making San Daniele prosciutto, from salting through eight other separate stages to the end of maturing (which takes at least 13 months, depending on the size of the ham).

After the ham-making process has been completed, the hams are assessed for quality. In addition to the traditional methods of inspection (needle-probe for aroma, "beating" for texture and a critical expert eye for an overall assessment), since 1993 analytical inspection parameters have been in force. An analytical profile of the ham (batch by batch and month by month) is drawn up for ratios of water, salt and proteins in a grid of minimum and maximum that constitute the optimum levels required to achieve a technologically perfect result with the required organoleptic properties. Since recent developments in consumer demand require that the product should be presented in a wider range of formats, the new law permits Prosciutto di San Daniele to be sold ready-sliced in special modified-atmosphere packs.

For pre-packed ham, the distinctive San Daniele "brand" is printed on the pack and the compulsory checks carried out include the inspection of individual packs (in

practice, each pack is "signed" by the quality controller) and the presence of inspectors at every stage of the packing process, so that there is an absolute guarantee that every single pack contains genuine Prosciutto di San Daniele.

### Notes of Nutrition

The nutritional value of Prosciutto di San Daniele can probably best be summed up by the discriminating consumer's instinctive conclusion – and the traditional wisdom – that Prosciutto di San Daniele "is good and does you good".

Although quite true, the above statement deals with the question of nutrition rather too superficially. In the light of recent research, it may now be said that Prosciutto di San Daniele "is good and does you even more good than you thought it did".

The studies perfected in 2011 by the Italian National Institute of Nutrition (INRAN, Istituto Nazionale di Ricerca per gli Alimenti e la Nutrizione) demonstrate that pork from Italian pig used for producing hams and traditional Italian sausages has made important steps forward in terms of nutrition, giving rise to a raw material characterized by high concentrations of minerals and vitamins, as well as a balanced content of saturated and unsaturated fats. Consequently, the reduction of saturated fats and increased unsaturated fats, which can have positive effects on the heart and blood circulation, there was a reduction in the ratio between saturated and unsaturated fatty acids,

which tends towards the values typical of vegetable oils or fish. Another important element is the presence of Omega-6: 50 g San Daniele ham will contain 13% of the daily requirement of an adult.



Prosciutto di San Daniele is an excellent source of high-quality complete proteins, vitamins and minerals.

This time, all the credit must go to the pig. Purpose-reared and appropriately fed, today's pig has a larger quantity of lean meat with a thinner (but not too thin) layer of subcutaneous fat. Above all, it has a substantial content of noble proteins.

We can almost count these proteins as we examine the nutritional characteristics set out in the regulation on San Daniele prosciutto. The biological food value is exceptionally high, thanks to the production in ham of free amino acids which facilitate digestion and the absorption of proteins. In addition, ham offers other bio-available components such as iron, zinc and B-complex vitamins. Thanks to the INRAN studies, we now know that the recent

development of our product's raw material has characterized a remarkable improvement in pork's – and therefore ham's – nutritional qualities. Ham's average food value may be summed up as follows:

Average nutritional values per portion (50 g)				
Energy value	Kcal	136		
	KJ	568		
Proteins	g	12,9		
Fats	g	9,3		
saturated	g	3,3		
	monounsaturated	g	4,3	
	polyunsaturated	g	1,4	
Carbohydrates	g	0,1		
Cholesterol	mg	41,5		
Sodium	g	0,89		
Phosphorus	mg	92	13,1 % RDA*	
Potassium	mg	291	14,5 % RDA*	
Zinc	mg	1,19	11,9 % RDA*	
Vitamin B1	mg	0,34	30,9 % RDA*	
Vitamin B2	mg	0,10	7,1 % RDA*	
Vitamin B6	mg	0,52	37,1 % RDA*	
Vitamin PP	mg	2,57	16,0 % RDA*	

(\*RDA = Recommended daily allowance)



San Daniele lies on Friulian Morainic Hills and, as can be seen from above in this photo, at a short distance from Julian Prealps, while westward Tagliamento River laps at the area. All that makes the zone's climate characteristic and very fit for prosciutto maturing. Photograph by Stefano Zanini.

We might also add that checks carried out so far to verify the analytical parameters of San Daniele prosciutto showed an average salt content (sodium chloride, or sea salt) of 4.5%. All in all, San Daniele prosciutto has a nutritional profile that is quite exceptional.

It is an open secret that the feeding regimes of the so-called "abattoir pigs" (maximum weight of 120-140 kg) that make up the bulk of foreign pig farm production are profoundly different. They do not, for example, allow for the specific accumulation of outer fat which in DOP-label pigs prevents an excessive build-up of fat in the meat.

No additives are permitted in Prosciutto di San Daniele.



The San Daniele label. The words PROSCIUTTO DI SAN DANIELE are arranged in a circle with the stylized representation of a ham bearing the letters SD in the central portion.

## How to recognize Prosciutto di San Daniele

In accordance with "designation of origin" regulations, Prosciutto di San Daniele is branded with an easily-recognized mark which is applied under strict supervision at the end of the production process. The mark indicates that all legally-required obligations and inspections have been carried out and therefore guarantees the quality of the ham and the ham-making procedures employed.

The brand is however only the final step in a lengthy process of certification that at each stage leaves on the ham the personal mark of the ham maker responsible for applying the relevant production standards.

It all begins at the pig farm, where the breeder puts a special tattoo on both of the piglet's thighs. The tattoo bears the breeder's own identifying code and a special mark indicating the month in which the animal was born.

At the abattoir, every fresh trimmed pig thigh is inspected and branded with an indelible identification code.

Then we find the DOT mark, together with the date on which ham making began, written out in full. Thanks to this symbol, it is always possible to calculate the maturing period the ham has undergone.

Finally, there is the mark bearing the identifying code of the ham-making establishment at which the ham was processed.

Dawn in the neighbourhood of San Daniele. Photograph by Florence Zumello.

### **The Prosciutto di San Daniele Consortium**

The Consortium was established in 1961 by a mixed group of citizens made up of producers of ham, entrepreneurs and various other people from San Daniele, with the purpose of protecting and publicizing the name and trademark of the San Daniele ham and defining rules for processing the product. Its members now include 31 ham factories (producers), all based within the boundaries of the municipality of San Daniele del Friuli. The Consortium maintains the Production Specifications

and ensures that they are applied correctly. It protects and safeguards the trademark in order to ensure that there is no misuse or illegitimate use of the trademark or of the “Prosciutto di San Daniele” Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), assigned by the Italian Ministry for Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies (MI-PAAF) issued on 22 April 2002, in accordance with Article 14, sub-section 15, Act of Law no. 526/99.

The Specifications ensure traceability of each single ham, since it requires stamps be affixed to the rind indicating the origin of the

pig, the ID of the slaughterhouse, the date on which processing was started and the ID of the ham factory. The Consortium promotes and implements activities for improving the quality of production. It provides assistance and technical advisory services for its member manufacturers. It safeguards the typical features and characteristics of the product, regulates issues of common interest to all the parties involved in the production chain (farmers, slaughterhouses, ham factories) and carries out technical and production standardization activities in every area of interest.

Gian Paolo GRI



## The numbers and the rust, the *domesticated* and the *wild*

The landscape changes as you travel through Manzano and on to Ronco Pitotti. I am struck by the sharp contrast between the strict geometry of the rows of vines on the hills and the looming thick wild wood. The contrast is more striking at the foot of the hills, with the orderly lines of Pinot noir. Two opposing worlds stand before me (order, disorder: nature and culture?), alongside one another, seemingly irreconcilable. But looking more carefully, the

feeling of contrast diminishes. There are also clear signs that these two words permeate: the domesticated and the wild are not totally separated, they overlap. The rows of vines are also a feeding place for the flocks of birds living in the wood, and on the paths along the vines there is evidence of boar and deer tracks. In the woods there are traces of past terracing and of the passage of hunters and people looking for wild herbs, mushrooms and snails.

Massimo Poldelmengo (Pordenone, 1964), a well-known sculptor, as well as a painter and a photographer, was commissioned to create an artwork to be placed in the Ronco Pitotti vineyard, a beautiful estate in the hills to the north of Manzano. The land is tended by Vignai da Duline, who take great pride in their sixteen rows of Pinot Noir. The beauty of the place and the 50 years spent working on this land, with the utmost respect for nature, inspired the artist to create a secular altar. It has been placed on a spur of land in a dominant position on the hill. It offers the visitor a place in which to stop and enjoy the view of the landscape of vineyards while tasting the wine in the very place where it was born. The surface of the table is made of 16 metal plates, symbolizing the rows of Pinot Noir.

What I am seeing helps me to better understand why the relationship between *dumiésti* and *salvâdi* (domesticated and wild) was so important in popular and peasant culture. On the one hand it was at the base of their way of being and of their relationship with the environment, characterized by the feeling of (and need for) a clearly defined separation between the human and that which threatens its stability. On the other hand, there was an awareness of this primary wild component: the remnants of nature and animal in mankind, which underlie any cultural construction. There was a profound understanding that these should not -and could not- be radically removed from mankind or the human soul without incurring dire consequences.

It was considered a good thing to “let oneself go” in the liminal spaces of the rites of passage. The annual invasion of the streets and homes by the monstrous masks was a positive thing, as were the stories about water creatures, *aganis* (sing. *agane*) and wood people, *salvans* (sing. *salvan*). These were borderline creatures, threatening and unsettling, but also masters of important skills like the curdling of the milk, the use of lye and the fermenting of grape must. There was nothing so distant and “wild” as the dead, and yet tradition taught about the times and places where the living and the dead could meet. The *benandants* (lit. “Good Walkers”), who were able to communicate

between this world and the other, were well known. So too the *herbère*, herbalists who were able to visit uncultivated lands to extract powerful medicines from the poisons found in nature. Domesticated and wild, nature and culture, separation and contamination: worlds and actions that did, and still should, live together. In peasant culture, the concept of *Wildness* was not understood only in terms of threatening foreignness, but also as a coessential factor for a well balanced personal and community life, and for the inner life and the exterior life which is the projection of it. How can this ancient wisdom, which was capable of simultaneous separation and coexistence, be translated today? The orderly arrangement of the vines is the perfect example of *dumiésti* (domesticated), it is geometry imposed on the landscape. I am not surprised that Massimo Poldelmengo used Roman numerals to identify the orderly succession of rows of the challenging Pinot noir vines. Not only do the bars making up the numeric symbols (whether they were originally notches or letters) contain a stronger geometrical essence than Arabic numerals, but they also directly recall the order imposed by



the centuriation of the Romans. This approach to land measurement was governed by the form of the square, set in right-angled grids and parallel lines. This was replicated in a small scale in the countryside around the villages when communal land was subdivided into lots, called, *sorti* (i.e. chosen by sortition). Having to deal with the domestication of landscape and of vines, what could be better than the square and the number four? In intercultural terms, four is the number of cosmic order (spatial, temporal, inner and community order) that can be recognised beneath the multiplicity and complexity of reality. Reality is conceived, measured and organised on the basis of this number: the four elements, the four points of the compass, the four humours and temperaments, the four seasons, the four phases of the moon, the four directions of the wind, the Gospels, the stages of spiritual elevation and so on, through to the four colours of the tarot and

the four suits of playing cards. Four, and four by four: in both Italian and Friulian the linguistic structure of the numbers changes at the number sixteen. The Pinot noir vine is reconsidered in the same way: a successful symbolic structure which brings everything together. Sixteen rows of vines; a number carved on a square plate for each row; the plates placed in the vineyard, soaking up the specific nature of the land; all the numbers and plates then reunited and brought back to the whole, in a square

made of squares. A kind of *umbilicus loci* which, since we are talking about wine, could only take the form of a table emerging from the vineyard, for sharing food and wine together.

Thus far we have considered domestication, geometry, artifice and culture, but what about the intrusion of the *salvadi* (wild), the place that must be kept for nature, to safeguard balance? We all know that iron is needed to build and maintain the vines. Because of my work, I am familiar with the old iron implements once used in the vineyards. They are now no more than materialised memories, only to be found in ethnographic museums. They may well have been restored and treated, but rust is like woodworm and it becomes a part of these metal tools. There are those for breaking up the ground (shovels, pickaxes, hoes, sledgehammers, crowbars, wedges and ploughshares); there are the remains of supporting wire, not yet galvanised; there are the metal tools for pruning (blades, shears and saws for vines, sickles) and those for ridging the rows and maintaining the paths between them (spades, two- and three-pronged forks, ploughs, scythes and accessories); there are the traditional tools for

preventing diseases (the manual sprays for Bordeaux mixture) and the traditional blades for harvesting, the metal barrel hoops, buckets, barrels and presses. Rust attacks, it corrodes, spreads, degrades and makes wild. It is *nature* that regains its vigour at the cost of culture. It is the exact counterpart of the creeping, wild wood which menacingly surrounds the vineyards of Ronco Pitotti. By adding more iron to the memory of the old iron in the vineyard, Massimo Poldelmengo integrates range of aesthetic elements into an ordered system which characterise the process of corrosion. There are a range of colouristic correspondences between rust progressively penetrating the iron plates left on the land, and the rusty surface of the full and ripe Pinot grapes. The similarity is remarkable.

By leaving the plates with their sequence of numbers for several months, letting these signs of domestication drink in and become impregnated with the nature and memory of the land of the vineyard, it is as if he were re-establishing the balance between the domestic and the wild. A balance which the peasants of the past knew so well and which we, in our modern times, risk forgetting.

Carlo PETRINI

# Friuli: a region where you always want to "come back soon"

When I hear Friuli mentioned, a multitude of memories at once come to mind, reinforced by sensory memory which is so much more vibrant and inexorable. In particular, the scents and flavours of the wines with which I was acquainted for a long, long time come back to me; such pleasant and convivial tastings on those hills before the beginning of Arcigola. We

went back to the area later with representatives of Slow Food and every time faces, words, friendships, and stories related to the initial development of my association come back to me, an association which, in Friuli, has always found fertile ground and great momentum, especially in the times when there was still so much to build.

Every journey in Friuli was an

opportunity to discover new experiences of the most unusual and richest enogastronomy in Italy. Here, I have always been well-guided by those who live and walk the land, animated by a passion for those things that go beyond a mere parochialism, but speak with a true and genuine pride, in the knowledge that they have so much to share with others.

A land of encounter between the cultures and traditions of three civilisations, the Neo-Latin, the Slavic and Germanic, the Friuli region, even because of the trials and tribulations of modern history which have limited its potential for decades, often expressed in the form of enogastronomy which no border has managed to block: the exchange of seed, vines, and dishes in a successful contamination which has enriched this world. It is enough to think of the vines that have been present in the region for so many decades that they can be considered indigenous: Rhine Riesling, Italian Riesling, Traminer, Blaufränkisch, Pinot Grigio which is called *Orlenda* here from its German name *Ruländer*. They are the fruit of the Austro-Hungarian government and its efficient agrarian institutions. On the other side, we discover some *bacari* which instead also indicate the transfer of families from Puglia to this region, who built bridge-heads here to better market the wines and oils they produced from the second half of the Nineteenth-century until the Fifties of the last century. Always in the second half of the Nineteenth-century, the Merlot and Cabernet arrived here and became widespread well before they did in other wine regions which, together with the Sauvignonasse (called Tocai in Friuli), laid the foundations of modern viticulture in the region. Even the influences which arrived from the Atlantic shores were accepted and put to good use in a commendable way, so much so that the Merlot and



In the Friulian lower plain the grape variety Pinot Grigio is called *Orlenda* from its German name *Ruländer*. Franco Dreossi's collection.

the Tocai have become two wine symbols of the Friuli region. In the diversity which has always distinguished regional viticulture, one can certainly not forget the grape varieties which for the most part can be termed indigenous such as the Picolit, Verduzzo, Refosco, the reborn Schioppettino and others of lower circulation.

In the Second World War, a major contribution to the production of wine, intended as food, was provided by a farming method of vines called *Casarsa*; this led to large-scale production per hectare and enabled many winegrowers to form companies with solid economic foundations which then evolved toward the pursuit of quality.

Arcigola first and Slow Food later, have strongly launched the image of Friulian winemaking, focusing primarily on the excellence of the white wines. With the invention of the Superwhites, our association has promoted, both in Italy and in the world, the awareness of these great wines, in a fruitful exchange and mutual satisfaction with the regional productive world.

Needless to say, my love for

regions with these human and gastronomic characteristics goes without saying, born at first sight (or taste) and long-lasting, renewing itself at every meeting.

Today, Slow Food in Friuli Venezia Giulia has been renewed; it has lowered the average age and the members of this extreme corner of eastern Italy are characterised by a strong enthusiasm which, I hope, will be contagious to other Italian regions and those neighbouring across the border. This is demonstrated by the work that is being done: projects, Presidia, the Ark of Taste products, a sector of production (not only wine) that is always attentive and co-operative. From the Upper Adriatic to the Carnic Mountains, our organisational structure has been strengthened, and the “antennas” of Slow Food are ready to register novelties and to rediscover important traces of the history of food of this region. It is no coincidence that the image of a stamp issued in 1950 was used by the last regional congress of the association, where each region was associated with a product or a trade. Corn fell under Friuli and today, Slow Food Regional together with ERSA, is attempting to recover some cereal varieties which were the basis for a number of food products, including bread and polenta.

While I think and write of Friuli, I can almost taste the priceless sweetness of certain hams, the uniqueness of certain wines, the strong pride that accompanies traditional dishes: I have an urge to return soon, and I will.

## The Slow Food presidia in Friuli Venezia Giulia

The Slow Food presidia in Friuli Venezia Giulia are nine: Garlic from Resia, Radic di mont, Formadi frant, Pan di sorc, Pestât from Fagagna, Pitina, Rosa di Gorizia, Onion from Cavasso and Val Cosa and Cheese from the rotating co-operative dairies.

### Garlic from Resia

The Garlic from Resia, called *strock* by the inhabitants of Resia, is a kind of sweet garlic, without the acrid aroma of the common varieties, and is particularly suitable for the production of cold meats. The crops are natural and the soil is fertilized with bovine manure. The production area is the Resia Valley, in the Tarvisio area.

The Resia Valley has long interested scholars and is famed for its carnival, singing, dances, characteristic music, archaic language and... its garlic. The Resian garlic has a smallish rose coloured bulb, of between six and ten cloves. What distinguishes this vegetable, or "spice", if you prefer, from the garlic in the plains is its organoleptic qualities: its pungent smell and far more decisive taste. For garlic pizza it is superb, a perfect match.



### Radic di mont

The *Radic di mont*, Alpine sow-thistle, is a particular kind of violet radicchio that can be found on Carnia's mountain pastures during the month of May. Its picking lasts only 15 days and each picker entitled to bring downhill one kilogram of radicchio at the most. This tender wild radicchio can be eaten in salads and omelettes.

The *Radic di mont* (Alpine sow-thistle) is a greenish brown plant that grows in the mountains (1000 - 1800 m) in the woods. It grows in acidic soil, among pines and alders, in the little mountain valleys and along streams. It is a protected plant, very rare, and can only be gathered in limited quantities. The sprouts are used, which have a slightly bitter taste. They are washed, cooked in oil, vinegar, white wine, herbs, salt and sugar, and pickled in their cooking liquid. Sprouts may be used to make *frittate* as well. Photograph by Ulderica Da Pozzo (POR FESR 2007 2013), Archivio Turismo FVG.



It was rarely possible to consume a whole sheep, goat, or large piece of game in the space of a day, and so to preserve these meats wìch, in all honesty, were far from prime, they needed to be cured. Two examples of these cured meats are *peta* and *pitina* (diminutive of *peta*) whose names derive from an identical Friulian word wìch denotes a sort of flattened non fermented bread made from a mixture of cereals. The taste of these cured meats was best suited to men with strong stomachs, although today there is a "ladies" version made with pork for those with more delicate palates.

### **Formadi frant**

The *Formadi frant* is a fresh cheese from Carnia born with the purpose of saving "defective" cheeses that had swollen or whose rind had broken. For its production, which occurs in Carnia's mountain pasture areas, people use raw milk cheeses only. The *Formadi frant* can be eaten after only 15 days of maturing or after a maturing period of two months at the most.

Originally *Formadi frant* was a means of rendering "failed" cheeses edible. These no longer exist, unless one counts those industrially processed abominations. Today, *frant* is made with a mixture of crumbled cheeses of varying ages, to wìch salt, pepper, milk, and cream are added, moulded into a kind of cheeses-like shape and then, thanks to some friendly bacteria, fermented for forty days. After wìch, it is all yours for the tasting, with potatoes perhaps, or a nice drop of Carnic cider.

### **Pitina**

The *Pitina*, of peasant origin, was born to meet the need to preserve meat in autumn and winter in the traditional poor areas of the valleys to the north of Pordenone, in the Tramontina Valley and in the Cellina Valley. In past times meat was chopped in the *pestadora*, a hollowed-out log, with salt, garlic and crushed black pepper. Some small meat balls were made, dipped into maize flour and smoked on the *foghèr* (fire-place) mantelpiece. Nowadays, the *Pitina* is smoked with various aromatic woods, mainly beech wood. The *Pitina* must be left to mature for at least 30 days and it can be eaten raw or cooked, also in its *Peta* and *Petuccia* versions, which are different from the *Pitina* due to the different herbs used and, in the case of the *Peta*, due to the larger size.

### **Pan di sorc**

The *Pan di sorc* (*sorc* means maize in Friulian) is the latest product to be included in the Slow Food presidia thanks to the Eco-museum of Waters of the Gemona Area, which has reposed the consumption and sale of this sweet and spicy bread, rich in transalpine influences. The locally grown maize, called *cinquantino*, grow and ripe in a period of 50 days at the most, even then managing to do a complete cycle also in the chill and rainy Gemona area.

### **Pestât from Fagagna**

The *Pestât* is a very peculiar seasoning created to preserve the scents and flavours of autumn vegetables and herbs in pork lard. Its production, on a family level, occurs during the slaughter of pigs, from November to March. The lard, coming from local pigs bred in a semi-wild manner with natural feeding, is minced and mixed with chopped vegetables and spices, put into natural casings and matured in damp and cool cellars.

### ***Rosa di Gorizia***

It is a local variety of red chicory (*Cichorium intybus*) similar to a just bloomed rose, and this is the reason why it takes the name of *Rosa di Gorizia* (Gorizia's rose). Known since the time of the Habsburgs, it has an intense taste, it is slightly bitter and crunchy. It is deep red in colour with pinkish or garnet red variegated shades. The *Rosa di Gorizia* is available on the market from December to February.

### ***Onion from Cavasso and Val Cosa***

This vegetable is grown in the piedmont area of western Friuli, in particular in the corner comprised between the Meduna and Cosa streams. It is characterized by a typical red tunic with golden reflections that gets pinker in the Val Cosa area. Inside, a crunchy and sweet heart makes the onion excellent when eaten raw as well, and never spicy. The onion from Cavasso and Val Cosa is picked in August and is preserved in plaits all year round.



### ***Cheese from the rotating co-operative dairies***

The tradition of the rotating dairies was once widespread all over Friuli. It was an economical and easy way of managing the milk, suitable for the small-scale dairy production of Friuli's territory, with many farmers in every village. The milk of many families was put and processed together. The cheese produced, simply called "latteria", i.e. dairy, is aged for up to one year. It is a cheese obtained with no use of industrial ferments from raw milk coming from small farms situated at a short distance from the dairy. At these farms the most widespread cattle breed is the local "Pezzata Rossa" (Dappled Red, Simmental like) that is not fed with maize silage.



Picturesque sunset in the lagoon of Marano Lagunare. Photograph by Florence Zumello.

### THE FISHING CULTURE

The communities of Marano Lagunare and Grado, with their lagoons, represent "ethnographic laboratories" of great interest, where the cohabitation of unhomogeneous cultural traits is made possible by a "culture of the sea" profoundly interiorized in community terms: a specific perception of space and time (of the tides and of the "seasons", that aren't those of the peasant world but those, very different, of the fish); a strongly integrated organization capable of reconciling the exasperated rivalry of the fishing "companies" in the internal competition for resources with the greater community solidarity in defence of the collective patrimony represented by the lagoon; specific forms of religiousness, built around the sense of precariousness that braves life on the water for the purpose of obtaining a livelihood; even a specific internal division of labour between men and women, that historically has seen the women entrusted with the construction of the network of relationships with peasant Friuli, through the door to door sale of the catch.

*Gian Paolo Gri*

Giuseppe CORDIOLI

# Friuli Venezia Giulia's sea

# B

Biologically essential for mankind, the sea has always thrilled and is also an inexhaustible resource. It is at once a destination and a challenge, a search for adventure, a desire to explore, a promise of escape, a need for peace, an exciting stimulus and at the same time an opportunity to rediscover tranquility.

Life itself originated in the sea. And an encounter with the sea continues to represent an experience of renovated exceptional nature. Sailing is an experience

of even fuller significance. To decide to confront and compete with the sea is to experience a legend. It means finding oneself in a new dimension with a different time and space, surrounded by the darkness of the unknown and the presence of danger. Yet it is also a chance to savour a slower, gentler pace of life, rediscovering what the true limits of existence are, without fleeing from them, coming face to face with nature and with oneself. However, the sea has also been – and continues

to be – a source of sustenance for all of those families who, through fishing, have been able to feed themselves and enjoy a more or less dignified existence.

Subsequently, in relatively recent times, tourism has become the main source of wealth for Friuli Venezia Giulia's entire coastal region.

From Trieste to the mouth of the Tagliamento River, the coast is home to a series of businesses which revolve around “the sea-world”.



An image of the "Barcolana" regatta/boat-race. Photograph by Stefano Zanini.

### **Trieste and the Barcolana regatta**

Thanks to its geographical position, Trieste is the most important maritime town of the region. Trade and commerce in particular have strengthened the ties the local population has had with the sea over the centuries. The port remains one of the main sources of employment and local economic activity. Yet there are also some more light-hearted reminders of the importance of the sea for the town, such as the Barcolana, one of largest regattas in Europe, with over two thousand participants each year. The first Barcolana was held in 1969, with 51 crafts taking part in the *Coppa d'Autunno* (Autumn Cup) organised by a group of sailing enthusiasts from the Barcola & Grignano Sailing Club. Since then it has grown

into a historical international sailing regatta which takes place every year on the second Sunday in October. It is one of the most crowded regattas in the world and is characterized by a peculiar formula: a single starting line where professional sailing teams line up against mere enthusiasts on crafts of various sizes divided into various classes. It is a big feast, not only for those taking part in it, but also for the hundreds of thousands of people who flock to watch the competition from the shores and hills that overlook Trieste.

Heading away from the region's capital and along the Barcola Riviera, where the inhabitants of Trieste gather during the summer months to sunbathe and stroll, one comes to Miramare Castle, surrounded by lush parkland and



The Miramare castle seen from above. Photograph by Stefano Zanini.

offering spectacular views directly over the sea.

The castle, commissioned by Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Hapsburg as a residence for himself and his wife, Charlotte of Belgium, was built around the middle of the nineteenth century. It is an example of a very well preserved luxurious noble residence, with its original furnishings, and is visited by thousands of tourists every year. In the surrounding waters, the Miramare Marine Reserve (the first of its kind in Italy) was established in 1986. 1,800 metres long and 200 metres wide, it covers an area of 36 hectares in which fishing is prohibited. It is surrounded by a buffer zone of around 90 hectares in which commercial fishing is banned. The maximum depth is 18 metres. Guided free-diving or scuba-diving tours are available from a visitor centre located in a building known as *Il Castelletto*.

## Mussels

The Gulf of Trieste boasts an extremely old tradition, dating back to 1732: mussel farming. The optimal environment of the seabed produces mussels which are incredibly tasty and of the highest quality. Mussels, squids, scallops, oysters and clams are part of this area's natural heritage, these all make a stay here a wonderful opportunity to taste the real authentic flavours of the sea.

## The mysterious river and the town of the shipyards

A few kilometres beyond Miramare lies Duino, where the Timavo River – the river of the Karst – flows into the sea. It is a mysterious, fascinating river whose subterranean course is still not fully known. The source of the Timavo river is in Croatia, at the foot of *Monte Nevoso* (Snežnik, Snowy Mountain), and after flowing for around forty kilometres it plunges into a huge chasm (in Slovenia) where it begins its otherworldly journey under the hard limestone before eventually resurfacing with three springs at San Giovanni di Duino, about two kilometres from the point in which it flows into the sea after a course of around eighty kilometres. Moving away from the picturesque mouth of the river we come to Monfalcone, the “capital” of Italy's shipbuilding industry and also the most northern town on the Mediterranean. It is known as the town of the shipyards. It is here that the majestic cruise liners that sail the oceans around the world, transporting thousands



Pink flamingoes start appearing along the seashores of Friuli. Photograph by Stefano Zanini.

## THE NATURE RESERVE "FOCE DELL'ISONZO"

of people every day, are assembled. The best architects have tried their hand at designing these white ships, with their jaw-dropping impressive size yet, at the same time, graceful. It was the Cosulich family that started the shipbuilding industry here in the mid-nineteenth century with the purchase of various steamships which connected Trieste to North and South America.

## Natural habitats – preserved and enhanced

The mouth of the Isonzo River lies a few kilometres from Monfalcone, a place that enchants anyone who spends some time there. To get to know the mouth of the Isonzo means discovering hidden landscapes of rare beauty: the Carnic and Julian Alps provide the backdrop as visitors immerse themselves in the woods surrounding the river. The *Isola*

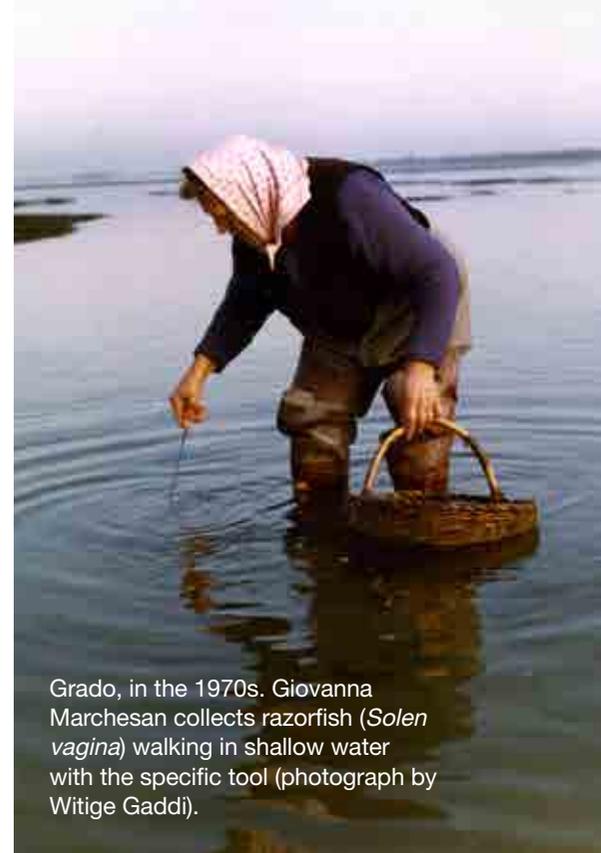
The source of the Isonzo River is in Slovenia and, after passing into Italy and crossing the city of Gorizia, it moves placidly to the sea, where it flows into places of singular beauty and naturalness. The Isola della Cona is a wet area which extends over about 2400 hectares, in which flocks of different species of birds find a favourable environment. Besides the walks and the splendid panorama one may have access to the observation points equipped for bird watching and the Marinetta, Cjos and Biancospino observatories. Also found on the Reserve are the visitors' centre and its Museum that shows the environments and organisms typical of the context; the Museum of renewable energy sources, where energetic sustainability is presented with multi-medial supports; and the Museum of the duckling. The refreshment-room "Al Pettiroso" is upstairs, where a large telescope allows one to explore the outside. Everything to make even the gloomiest day a marvellous experience in the midst of nature.

della Cona Nature Reserve welcomes hundreds of visitors every year: here the natural habitats host a diverse wealth of flora and fauna and many bird species (300, including 80 nesting species) that can be observed at close quarters. A number of Camargue horses – which due to their physical characteristics (they are not heavy and have wide hooves) – have been introduced into the reserve. Most of them live in the wild, and so help keep the vegetation under control, while some are reared and used both by staff of the nature reserve and for guided tours.

### Grado

Our journey along the coast continues towards Grado, a tourist and spa resort of major importance over the centuries. What is commonly called the "Island of the Sun" because of its peculiar climate was once a Roman port serving the nearby town of Aquileia. The *castrum* developed in par-

ticular when many inhabitants of the plain fled in the face of the invaders who brought about the fall of the Roman Empire. Following the invasions of the Lombards, the Patriarch Paulinus transferred the Patriarchate of Aquileia to Grado: the island thus took on a prime political and religious role. Some centuries later the Patriarch of Grado transferred his residence to Venice, which is why people from Grado call their city the "Mother of Venice". Thereby Grado went back to being a poor fishing town, and so it remained until the tourism industry flourished during the final period under Austrian rule. Bathing and the beneficial effects of thalassotherapy have made it one of the "Pearls of the Adriatic", known the world over. Grado is also famous for its lagoon, formed by a series of channels and ponds in which a number of highly prized fish are raised, in particular bass and bream. On the small islands where until a few decades ago several families lived, the



Grado, in the 1970s. Giovanna Marchesan collects razorfish (*Solen vagina*) walking in shallow water with the specific tool (photograph by Witige Gaddi).

dwelling (*casoni*) are still built today with thatched roofs and west-facing doors, as the terrible winter wind known as the *bora* blows from the east. A timeless place, an unspoiled kingdom of water, wind and silence, where nature manages to thrill visitors. Now some of the inhabitants of the islands of Grado's lagoon have repurposed their *casoni* to accommodate guests. Thus an *Albergo diffuso* (to the letter *widespread*



Olivo Trottolo rearranges the nets before going fishing (Photograph from the 1960s by Witige Gaddi).

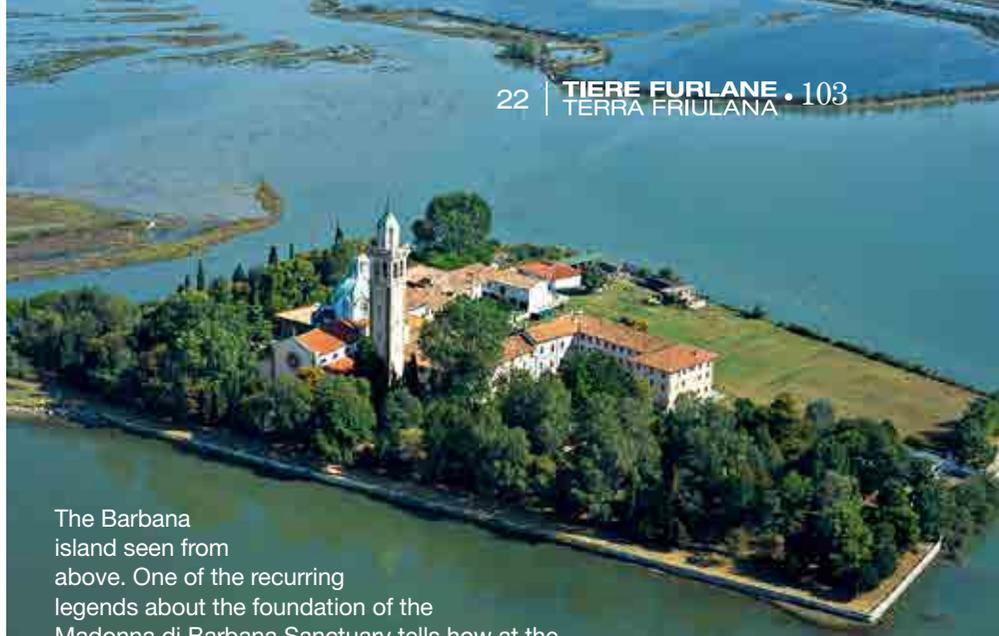


Bepi Grillo fishing for 'guatti' with the specific tool hitting them in the mud during low tide. Photograph from the 1960s by Witige Gaddi.

*hotel*), a way of accommodating people in various converted out historic buildings in a small community, has grown up on the island, where many tourists go to stay, immersed in silence and picturesque natural scenery. In some of these *casoni* there is even hot water of geothermal origin, enabling baths to be taken even in the coldest months.

In contrast, those who stay on the main island, which is now connected to the mainland by a bridge built in 1936, will find plenty more opportunities for fun thanks to several kilometres of sandy beaches with shallow water. Ideal places for families with small children who can paddle for as long as they like in complete safety. The highly peculiar characteristic of the sandy shore means that it has been possible – including in recent times – to use its sand for spa treatments. Even today, the spa resort offers inhalation treatments with seawater as well as sand baths in special spaces during the warmer months.

Evenings can be spent strolling through the old part of town, a maze of picturesque *calli* and *campielli*: the ancient heart of Grado, where it is still possible to make out the ancient architecture of the fortress, the Roman *castrum* used as a refuge during invasions. The perimeter of the ancient *castrum* marks out the area where many traditional local restaurants have sprung up and the finest gastronomic specialities are served, accompanied by Friuli Venezia Giulia's renowned wines.



The Barbana island seen from above. One of the recurring legends about the foundation of the Madonna di Barbana Sanctuary tells how at the time of the patriarch of Grado, Elia, some sailors saw a sacred image floating on the water after a storm; it soon attracted crowds of pilgrims, repaying their devotion with many miracles. The first Sunday in July, boats decked out with flags head off in a procession towards the island, a joyous and lively manifestation of the fervour that the people of Grado show towards their patron saint, Our Lady Mary. Photograph by Massimo Crivellari (POR FESR 2007 - 2013), Archive of Turismo FVG.

The island's traditional dish is a tasty soup called *boreto*. Depending on the chef's preferences, *boreto* can be prepared with one or several types of fish. Its origin can be traced back to the fishermen who once inhabited the lagoon permanently, making a living from fishing. The best of the catch was sold, while the lower quality fish was placed in a cast-iron pan (which was never washed, so as not to eliminate the flavour) with a drop of seed oil and garlic cloves and then sprinkled with white wine vinegar and plenty of black pepper. Regarding wines to go with this dish, although some still prefer the traditional white, nowadays the prevailing trend is to accompany it with characterful, strong-flavoured reds.

The main religious tradition of the community is the *Perdòn de Barbana*, which for many hundreds of years has been celebrated on the morning of the first Sunday in July. A statue of the Madonna is borne on an evocative procession of boats from the Basilica of Sant'Eufemia to the island of Barbana, where an ancient Marian shrine stands. The origin of the pilgrimage dates back to 1237 when the people of Grado vowed to make their way to Barbana every year in sign of gratitude for the end of a plague epidemic. The procession, which starts early in the morning and is preceded by a day of contemplation and celebration (the *Sabo grando*), attracts tourists and pilgrims from all over northern Italy as well as from nearby Slovenia and Austria.



Marano Lagunare: the walls of this 15<sup>th</sup> century tower are decorated with coats of arms and busts of the Venetian *Provveditori* (General Superintendents). Other busts can be found in the houses that surround the square thus creating an anthology of portraits. Photograph by Florence Zumello.



## Marano Lagunare

A town very similar to Grado in terms of its traditions is Marano Lagunare. In recent centuries it was under Venetian rule, and many of its buildings are reminders of this period. There is still a tower, called the *Torre Mille-naria*, which is 32 metres high and once served as a watchtower. This tower was severely damaged, and subsequently rebuilt, after the earthquake that shook Friuli Venezia Giulia in 1976. Marano boasts a large fleet of fishing boats, although in the last few decades the numbers conducting commercial fishing operations have steadily declined as a result of a profound crisis.

The rapid development of fishing in this community owes its origin to two factors: the motorisation of fishing vessels and the use of synthetic materials to make fishing nets.

Motorisation cut distances and multiplied fishing opportunities, whereas once fishermen were forced to live at sea for whole weeks at a time. Now, thanks to powerful engines and the newest radar equipment, boats can put to sea even when conditions are not optimal. Another equally critical factor is the use of nylon to make nets, which were once much less resistant to inclement conditions and therefore required continuous maintenance. As a result the

town owed much of its good fortune to the booming trade in fish: a valuable, highly-sought-after commodity. Marano's fish market is renowned, not just for the quality of its produce – placed on sale daily – but also for the presence of a number of highly active wholesalers. Specially equipped refrigerated vans and lorries link the town to Italian and European markets.

This modern approach makes one a little nostalgic for the shouts of the women who once would arrive in the towns of the Friuli plain to sell their meagre catch from baskets over their shoulders or exchange it for fruit and vegetables.

## Lignano, the "spiral" and Hemingway

A few nautical miles away, another kind of industry exploded: tourism. The capital of summer fun is Lignano, a long peninsula situated between the lagoon and the mouth of the River Tagliamento River.

Lignano's tourism industry started to develop at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the construction of the first hotels. At the time the peninsula was covered by a pine forest, and the few farms present were located on the coast. Yet the true "explosion" came in the middle of last

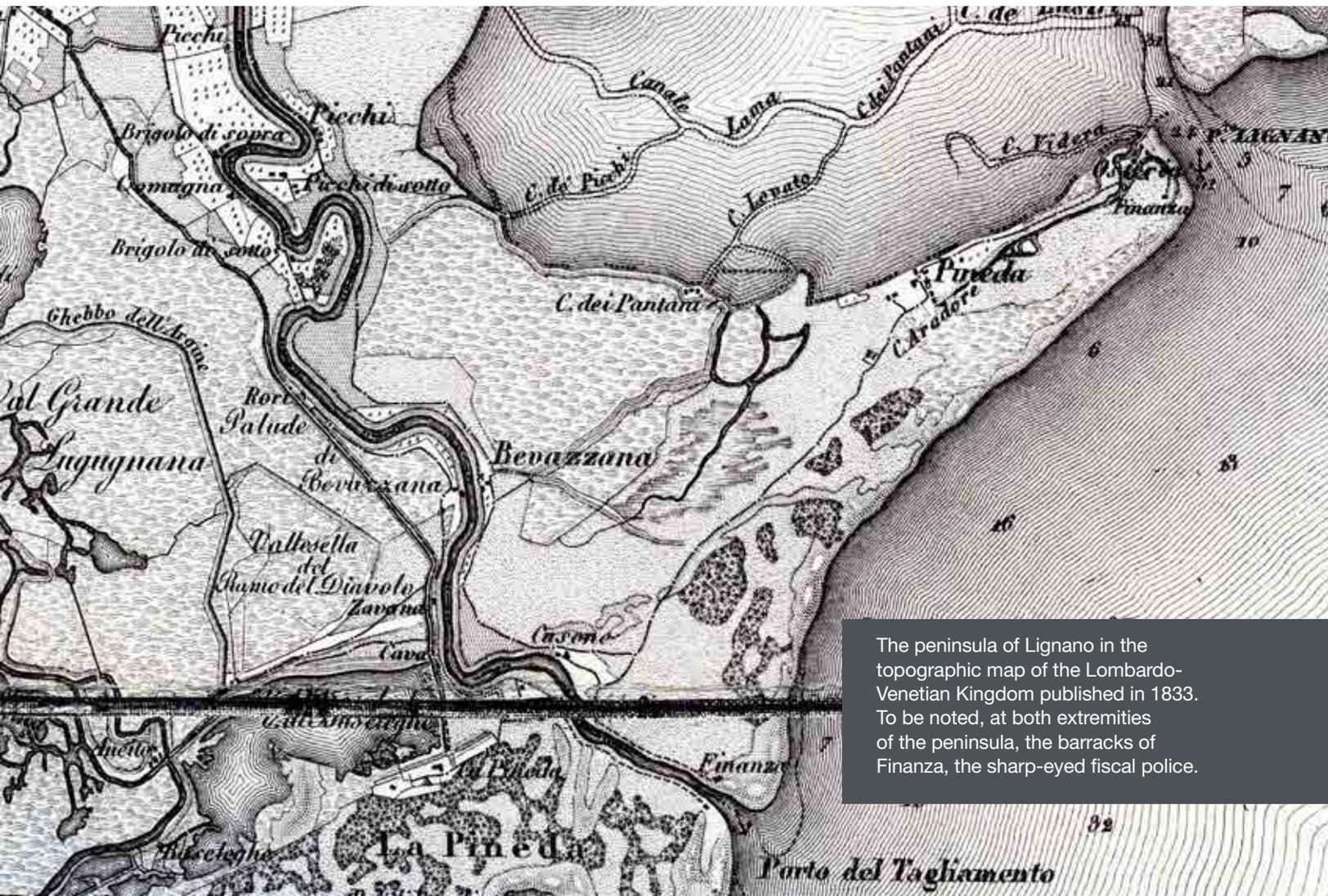
century. In June 1953, work began on the famous green "spiral" of Lignano Pineta, which came about through the initiative of a group of Friuli entrepreneurs, who had placed their faith in an innovative urban development project conceived by architect Marcello D'Olivo.

The project was covered by a number of magazines due to its originality and functionality, not only because it did not spoil the landscape or the pine forest, but also because it came to symbolise the resort, so much so that the Pineta spiral has been placed on the coat of arms, gonfalon and

flag of the municipality of Lignano Sabbiadoro.

The celebrated writer Ernest Hemingway, who often stayed in the region, once called Lignano "the Florida of Italy", which is confirmed by the presence of thousands of tourists who live up the beaches in the summer.

Concluding our journey along Friuli Venezia Giulia's coast is the Tagliamento, the region's largest river, which thanks to its 178-kilometre course is considered to be the only river of its kind in Europe, due to the ecosystems which it hosts and its braided morphology of interweaving channels.



The peninsula of Lignano in the topographic map of the Lombardo-Venetian Kingdom published in 1833. To be noted, at both extremities of the peninsula, the barracks of Finanza, the sharp-eyed fiscal police.



the Municipality of Drenchia (UD)

This aerial of Clabuzzaro, a hamlet of Drenchia, depicts the difficulties of living in a hard environment. Photograph by Florence Zumello.

Enrico FILAFERRO and Araldicacivica.it

# Agriculture and civic heraldry in Friuli Venezia Giulia

**A**t the turn of the first millennium, many towns and cities in Northern Italy started to govern themselves autonomously, giving origin to small semi-democratic republics, the *Comuni* (communes). Those Municipalities, which were at times disputing and fighting against their neighbours, at other times joining forces with them to fight the German Emperors (just think of Frederick Barbarossa), had obviously their distinctive symbols, flags and coats of arms, under which citi-

zens rallied in arms, symbols that they kept even when time passed and circumstances (and rulers) changed.

But these were only a handful, compared with the vast number of humble, almost anonymous Municipalities that originated during the following centuries.

When Italy became a State, more or less complete, at the end of the 19th century, it was required for each Municipality to ask for the *riconoscimento* (acknowledgement) of an already existing coat

of arms, or *concessione* (royal, then presidential, grant) of a new one. Municipalities that had no historical coat of arms, which were the majority, were suggested to draw inspiration from something typical of the area to create one, be it monuments, landscape features, history, or, and here we get to the point, local products. Due to the fact that Friuli's economy was mainly based on agriculture, crops, farming tools and animals started to appear on the shields of local Municipalities.



the Municipality of  
Ronchi dei Legionari (GO)



the Municipality of Bertolio (UD)



the Municipality of Grimacco (UD)



the Municipality of  
San Floriano del Collio (GO)

## Grapes

Among these agricultural legacies, wine, symbolized by vines and grapes, is the first to appear on a coat of arms of our region. The Municipality of Ronchi dei Legionari (GO), formerly simply named Ronchi and at that time belonging to Austria-Hungary, displays *Gules, a mountain range with three peaks argent; on a base vert four vines proper*, whose use was authorized in 1912 by emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria. The mountains appearing in the background can be identified with Julian Alps and Prealps. Much later (1942), Bertolio (UD) obtained the right to use *Quarterly, first and fourth argent a [red] grape leaved of two, proper; second and third sable*, to remember its well known wines. White and black were the colours of the noble Savorgnan family ruling the area. Even though located in a steep, wooded and relatively cool area, the Municipality of Grimacco (UD) also wished to cite viticulture among its main features, bearing this coat of arms: *Argent, a wavy bend azure; in escutcheon a hill of three mounds vert; on the canton sinister, a grape proper*. The use of the colour blue is reminiscent of the Cosizza River, running through the valley splitting the Municipality's territory into two parts. The mounds, or hillocks, stand for higher mountains, and are a typical feature of Italian heraldry, often described as *monti all'italiana*, "mounts Italian-style". Even stranger is the appearance of a grape in the coat of arms granted in 1980 to the Municipality

of Dogna (UD). The Municipality is located in a deep valley amidst steep and rocky mountains, which are also depicted on the shield: *Party per fesse argent and gules, in chief a mountain with two summits, vert; in base a [red] grape, leaved of two, proper. On the partition a fesse azur*. The blue stripe recalls the Fella River, on which banks Dogna sits. Three years later, Dolegna del Collio (GO) changed its previous coat of arms and obtained the following: *Party per fesse, azur and gules; in chief a hill proper into which a spade, per pale, or, the handle wooden, is stuck, burdened with two vines, proper; in saltire, fruited or of four; accosted by six stars (three and three) of five horns, argent. In base, a writing pen [feather] or, per bend sinister*. While the hill reminds of the local landscape and the vines make reference to the most remarkable crop (the territory is located in Collio DOC), the feather pen recalls Pietro Zorutti, Friulian poet born in Lonzano, a hamlet of the Municipality. One of the last Municipalities to obtain a coat of arms in Friuli Venezia Giulia was San Floriano del Collio (GO), in 2004. Its shield comprises both a white grape, symbolising the renowned white wines produced in the area, and the eponymous saint. It can be so described: *Per bend azur and or. On the first, a grape, argent, joined to its shoot, proper; leaved of three, vert. On the second, Saint Florian [...] pouring water from a black bucket*.



the Municipality of  
Dolegna del Collio (GO)

Ruttars is a picturesque hamlet in the municipality of Dolegna del Collio. The area has always had great renown for the wines produced there. Photograph by Stefano Zanini.

The rugged mountains of Bordano were especially suited to breeding sheep, but the cultivation of the vine was not neglected (from Topographisch-geometrische Kriegskarte von dem Herzogthum Venedig, 1798-1805, edited by Anton von Zach).

Bordano (UD) is a kind of *trait de union* between this first part, dedicated to vines and grapes, and the second one, covering cattle. In 1980, this town was granted the use of a coat of arms showing two activities significant at the time: viticulture and sheep husbandry. In fact, its description is: *Gules,*

*on a base vert, a silver sheep, statant, bearing in its mouth a grape, or. Over all, a chief, party per fesse azur and argent. Grapes were grown on terraces, while the presence of sheep and not of cows, recalls the difficulties of grazing on the steep sides of the mountains where this commune is located.*



the Municipality of Bordano (UD)

## Cattle

Due to the harsh winter climate of the region, pasture farming was, and still is, limited to summer time in alpine wide prairies, if existing, above tree line. Moreover, the fragmentation of the estates added further difficulties, because it made practically impossible the free grazing of cattle even during good weather.

The image of a cow on some municipal coats of arms does not mean, therefore, that people living in such area used to leave animals graze freely, but only that they relied upon milk, butter and cheese for their subsistence.

The oldest (1921) use of such images is observed on the Raccolana's coat of arms. This small village, now a hamlet of Chiusaforte (UD), until 1928 was an autonomous Commune, whose jurisdiction included the *Piani del Montasio*, where the name of Friuli's most famous cheese comes from. Its coat of arms is thus described: *Azur; a mountain with three summits, proper; on the base, vert, a spruce of the same and a cow or, collared and belled argent.* The metal (i.e. colour) of the cow states the importance given to livestock in the economy of the area, while the mountains recall the geographical features of the surroundings.

The coat of arms of Tramonti di Sopra (PN), despite probably an unofficial version, also conveys a similar message: *Argent, a wavy bend azur; on a base vert, a cow statant before a spruce, both proper.* The tree stands for

another source of income in the area, timber, while the wavy bend represents the Meduna River, which runs at the bottom of the valley.

A tree is also represented on the coat of arms received in 1942 by Drenchia (UD), but this time it is a cornelian cherry, dogwood (*Cornus mas* L.), due to the fact that the name of the Municipality is supposed to come from *drién*, the local name for such a plant. The image of the animal recalls the hay brought home from far away with a *gerla*, a tool akin to the *pack basket of Maine*, and, again, the cows, very often only one per family, pasturing outdoors under the care of a kid. This is the description: *Azur; a base vert, a dogwood issant, a black and white cow passant.*

It is worth pointing out that the sketches of the coat of arms presented for approval to Italian heraldic authorities by Friulian Municipalities, were drawn, emblazoned, by specialized studios located hundreds of miles away, that ignored almost everything about our economy and lifestyle. Therefore, the typical small brownish cow ubiquitous in Friuli during the past centuries gave way, on Drenchia's shield, to a Holstein Friesians-like cow, which no peasant could afford to buy, nor feed properly with the meagre hay they could provide. Moreover, it took plenty of time, sometimes ten or twenty years, to obtain a coat of arms: wars, delays in the payment of fees due to the Heraldic Office, refusal, from



the Municipality of Dogna (UD)



the Municipality of Stregna (UD)

the Office, of the coat of arms required by the Municipalities. Such reasons, together with the time elapsed from the granting of the coat of arms to a Municipality to date, explain why many shields look old-fashioned, dated, bearing references to an economy and to practices that are no longer significant or representative. Stregna (UD) is another Municipality whose shield shows some similarities with the two patterns above: a tree, a bovine, and a wavy bend representing a stream,



the Municipality of Treppo Grande (UD)



the Municipality of San Vito al Torre (UD)



the Municipality of Val Raccolana (UD)



the Municipality of Cordenons (PN)

in this case the Judrio River. A slight difference can be found in the type of elements represented: an ox instead of a cow, and a chestnut tree instead of a spruce or a dogwood. The description is the following: *Argent, a wavy bend, azur; on a hillock, vert, a chestnut, proper, fruited or with seven pieces, per fesse 4, 3, with an ox statant addorsed to the tree trunk.* As in previous instances, the hillock and the tree represent the landscape and the fruits respectively, the latter good both for food and as cash crop. Treppo Grande (UD), on the morainic hills of Friuli, displays on its coat of arms both ancient and recent features: *Per bend, gules and or. In the first, three wheat ears, or. In the second, on a base vert a cow grazing. On the partition, a Roman road, proper.* The latter refers to the Roman road that, *per compendium*, joined the *Via Annia*, running West-East from *Patavium* to *Aquileia*, with the *Via Julia Augusta*, leading, with its branches, from South to North, from *Aquileia* to the *Noricum*, today's Austria. The cow and the wheat remind us about the main activity in the area back then, farming. While the previous four Municipalities were located in mountainous or hilly areas, San Vito al Torre (UD) lies in the plain, and displays an enigmatic and complex coat of arms, granted in 1987: *Quarterly. On the first, vert, a mitre or; the second, gules and or; the third, or and gules; on the fourth, a cow,*

*argent, grazing on a base, vert.* Out of heraldic terms, the mitre, headgear of bishops, meant that Aquileia's Patriarchy ruled over the area, while the cow, depicted in a bucolic setting, is intended to recall the fertility of the area. Two more Municipalities, Buja (UD) and Manzano (UD), bear on their shields some *bovine* features, but images, in these cases, are not connected with the local economy. The 1929 coat of arms of the former shows the following: *Azur, an ox passant, proper, on three hills vert [...]* with reference both to the hilly landscape of the area, and the supposed etymology of the name, the Latin *bos*, 'ox'. Manzano name is connected with Latin, but in a late, vulgar Latin version, where *\*mandjus* (hence *Mandianus* and then *Manzano*) meant 'ox' too.

### Wheat

Not only cheese and wine represented the backbone of the Friulian agriculture, but also cereals. Surprisingly though, while wheat is often pictured in Friulian coats of arms, in the form of a spike or a sheaf, no mention of maize, the most important cereal in our agriculture, is found in Friulian civic heraldry, and no corn cobs appear in our municipal coats of arms. Wheat is depicted only in the coat of arms of Municipalities located in the Friulian plain. The oldest of such coats of arms granted to a Friulian Municipality is the one of Cordenons (PN), dating 1911. This town is located



the Municipality of  
Tramonti di Sopra (UD)

*Dryas octopetala* (mountain  
avens) in Val Tramontina,  
municipality of Tramonti di  
Sopra. Photograph by Luciano  
Gaudenzio (POR FESR 2007 -  
2013), Archivio Turismo FVG.



the Municipality of Azzano Decimo (PN)



the Municipality of Basiliano (UD)



the Municipality of Carlino (UD)

in a plain area rich of running water, used to generate mechanical power. It is therefore not surprising that the town symbols bore a clear reference to the double face of the local economy: industry (cotton and paper mills), recalled by a gearwheel, and agriculture, here symbolized by wheat. The coat of arms can be described as such: *Azur, an iron gearwheel, proper, with three wheat spikes, or, intertwined in the wheel per bend, per pale, per bend sinister.*

Back then (before 1931) wheat was still harvested by means of a sickle, which Azzano Decimo (PN) represents in its coat of arms: *Azur, a sickle argent hafted sable, per bend sinister, collared to a wheat garb [or], per bend, banded gules.*

Wheat ears (spikes) are displayed in the 1942 coat of arms of Basiliano (UD): *Vert, seven wheat ears or, per fesse 2, 3 and 2, to remember both the seven villages forming the Municipality, and farming, the main activity in the area.*

Before Romans conquered Friuli, a vast plain forest, called *Silva Lupanica*, span across the Friulian lower plain, connected with *Silva Phaetontea* west of the Livenza River and with *Silva Diomedea* east of the Isonzo River. Of this large expanse of trees, only small patches remain nowadays, worth of careful conservation. Wishing to keep memory of the past features of its territory, the Municipality of Carlino (UD) asked for, and obtained, the fol-

lowing coat of arms: *Azur, on a base, vert, a tree proper, and on the sinister a wheat spike or; on the dexter chief point a star of six horns, argent.* The wheat indicated the wealth coming from the farming carried out on reclaimed soils.

Most of the above mentioned *Silva Lupanica* lay below the *Linea delle risorgive* (for more information, see above “A Unique Region: Natural Environments and Plant Endemics”), which many rivers spring from.

Therefore Pcenia (UD), whose territories are set in that area, was entitled in 1962 to display the following coat of arms: *Vert, two fesses abased, argent, each charged with one fish, proper; the lower counter-naiant, surmounted by three wheat spikes fan shaped, or, in chief an escroll with the motto PULCINEA A.D. MCCLI, sable.* The figures recall fish breeding and farming, while the writing on the scroll indicates the first appearance of the toponym (1251).

In the same year also Pradamano (UD) obtained its coat of arms: *Gules, a fesse argent; in chief, per fesse, three wheat ears or, palewise; in base a mound, vert.* While the meaning of wheat is clear, as usual, the presence of a symbol indicating something that elevates from its surroundings, in the shield of a Municipality whose territory is totally flat, is ambiguous.

Chiopris-Viscone (UD) displays since 1972 a complex but self-explaining coat of arms: *Vert, a*



the Municipality of  
Chiopris-Viscone (UD)

*scythe, a nine tooth rake, a spade, argent hafted sable, displayed per bend, per pale, per bend sinister; over all a wheat sheaf, or, per pale, banded gules, the ears upwards.* The meaning is clear: green, for the environment; tools, for the men's work; wheat, for the crops.

Ten years later, Capriva del Friuli (GO) obtained a very similar shield: *Azur, a scythe, a nine tooth rake, a spade, argent hafted sable, displayed per bend, per pale, per bend sinister; over all a wheat sheaf, or, per fesse, banded three times gules, the ears leftwards.* The meaning is obviously the same as above, with the blue colour of the shield standing for the sky. Popular etymology says that Pagnacco (UD) takes its name from Greek-Roman god Pan, protector of fields, groves, and wooded glens, but also connected to fertility and the spring season. Hence, the Municipality's coat of arms recites: *Azur, the god Pan proper; on the sinister chief corner, two wheat spikes, or, per saltire.* On the same field, whose colour means glory, vir-

tue and incorruptible firmness, fantasy, the mythological image, and reality, the wheat, meaning agriculture as usual, coexist. Simple and essential is the coat of arms of Pravidomini (PN): *Gules, three wheat spikes empoignée.* The latter term recalls the wheat bundle grasped for cutting.

### Other coats of arms

Agriculture, is recalled in some way in other coats of arms.

Frisanco (PN) and Montenars (UD), for example, display a chestnut tree, whose fruits were sold or eaten.

In other instances, communes exhibit on their shields instruments related with agricultural work or products: Moimacco (UD) a plough, Visco (UD) a vat with farming tools, Mariano del Friuli (GO) scythes and bees. Others, like Bicinicco (UD), Moraro (GO) and San Vito di Fagagna (UD), show a white mulberry tree, whose leaves were used to feed the silkworm, a source of cash for our farmers. In a hidden way, the same message is carried by Farra d'Isonzo (GO), which has gold as one of its tinctures, to symbolize and to recall the silkworm cocoon.

### Acknowledgements

Due to Italian regulations, the images of Municipalities' coat of arms are copyright, and their use is subject to different and non-homogeneous rules. Therefore, in this article the images recreated by the artists of Araldicaviva.it have been instead used. We thank them for their concession.



the Municipality of Pocenia (UD)



the Municipality of  
Capriva del Friuli (GO)



the Municipality of Pagnacco (UD)



the Municipality of Pravidomini (PN)



the Municipality of Pradamano (UD)

Back to the Sixties: a photo of Lovaria, a hamlet of Pradamano, by Cartolnava.

Lovaria (Piddine) - Via Principale

## A micro glossary of heraldic terms

*Argent* = silver (i.e. white)

*Azure* = blue

*Banded* = said of two or more objects (e.g. a garb or branches of a tree) that are bound together with a band of a different tincture

*Base* = the lowermost part of the shield, that in Italian is usually named *campagna* or *pianura*, depending on its thickness

*Bend* = a stripe, one third of the shield, running from the upper dexter corner of the shield to the lower sinister corner

*Canton* = corner

*Chief* = a belt, usually one third of the shield, located at its top

*Dexter* = right side (keep in mind that in heraldry left and right

are described as seen by the shield bearer)

*Escutcheon (in)* = in the very centre of the shield

*Fesse* = in the same position of a waist belt

*Fruited* = bearing fruits

*Gules* = red

*Hafted* = with a handle of different colour

*Horn* = so are called star's points

*Issant* = coming out from a partition

*Or* = gold (i.e. yellow)

*Partition (on the)* = of something lying on a dividing line previously described

*Passant* = walking through, from heraldic left to the right

*Per bend* = as a band or strap running from the upper dexter corner of the shield to the lower sinister corner

*Per bend sinister* = opposite of the previous

*Per fesse* = horizontal, as a waist belt

*Per pale* = vertical, standing as a pole

*Proper* = depicted in its natural colours

*Sable* = black

*Saltire (in)* = arranged as Saint Andrew's cross

*Sinister* = left side (see dexter for details)

*Statant* = standing with all the legs on the ground

*Vert* = green

Umberto ALBERINI and Angelo VIANELLO

# A Unique Region: Natural Environments and Plant Endemics

## The geography

The territory administered by the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia covers 7,862 km<sup>2</sup>, which correspond roughly to a little more than 2.5% of the country. From an environmental perspective, it is one of the most sensitive and complex geographical areas of the European continent. In the West, the region borders with the Veneto Dolomites and descends toward the sea with the outer

fringes of the great Padan Plain. To the North, the main Carnic Chain divides it from the valley of the Gail River, a tributary of the Drava River, which then flows into the Danube, near Osijek in Croatia. To the East, the Alps and the Julian Prealps, together with the Collio and the Karst, delimit the territory, after having crossed the point of natural watershed between the waters that run toward the Adriatic and those that flow

back to the Black Sea (the Sella di Camporosso, at 817 m above sea level); this area includes a little portion of land mass, which geographically belongs to the Istrian peninsula, a small outpost of the Balkan peninsula. To the South, the Adriatic Sea embraces the entire regional coast, from the mouth of the Tagliamento River – the longest of this region of Italy (178 km) – up to the tip of San Bartolomeo (south of Muggia).

This quick list of cardinal points already leads us to understand that we are in a small region, but extremely diversified, where the mountain ranges have numerous accessible passes without great difficulty. Therefore, the roads have always been open to the traffic of people and goods between the Central European regions of the Danube basin (to which, geographically, belongs also the basin of the Slizza Torrent, in the Tarvisio area) and the Italian peninsula. In the same manner, the contiguity between the Padan Plain and the Friulian Plain has never hindered trade in that direction.

Friuli Venezia Giulia is primarily characterised, at its most northern part, to the West by the presence of the Carnic Alps, which run along the border with the Republic of Austria; these mountains are crossed by the upper course of the Tagliamento – the main Friulian river – as well as by the Degano and But Torrents. Finally, the Fella Torrent divides the Julian Alps from the Carnic Alps. Another area, which distinguishes the regional geography, is represented by the Prealps, Carnic to the West and Julian to the East, separated by the course of the Tagliamento.

The regional territory also has an extensive range of hills which, located where the great river emerges from the mountains into the plain, is constituted by the residual moraines of the extensive *Tilaventino* glacier, which covered, during the Würm period,



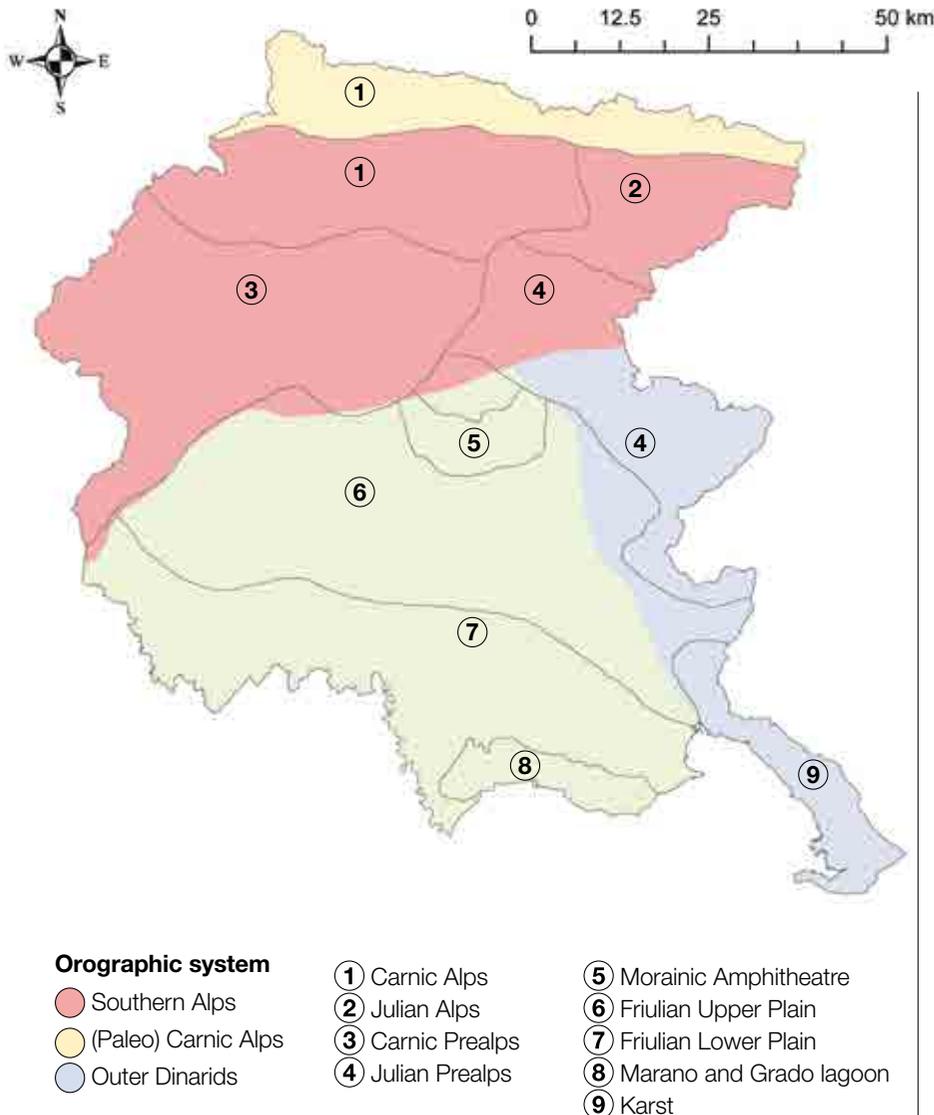
The Friuli Venezia Giulia Region. The region covers 7,862 km<sup>2</sup>. To the North it borders with Austria, with Slovenia to the East, and with the Veneto region to the West, while to the South it is bordered by the Adriatic Sea. This region, therefore, lies at the confluence of the three most important geographical/cultural areas of Europe: Germanic, Slavic and Latin-Mediterranean. It is crossed by two major rivers: the Tagliamento and the Isonzo.

a part of the High Plain. Eastward instead, the course of the Torre, Natisone and Judrio Rivers traverse the areas of the eastern hills and Collio, the latter also lapped by the Isonzo River, that originates in Slovenia as the Soc̑a but at its southernmost point traverses the eastern plains of the Friuli Venezia Giulia to flow into the Adriatic Sea.

The Friulian Plain, the extreme eastern offshoot of the Padan Plain, is divided into Upper and Lower, on the basis of the composition of its soil, gravelly and

coarse to the North and silty-loam and clayey to the South. This division creates an imaginary but real line, named the line of the *Risorgive*.

Further South, the extensive lagoons of Marano and Grado cover over 160 km<sup>2</sup> and are a relic of the only lagoon that once stretched from Ravenna to Aquileia. The lagoon is embraced by the mouths of the Tagliamento River to the West and the Isonzo to the East, as well as the geological cause of silting produced by their liquid flow.



The Adriatic Sea, which at this point is the northernmost point of the whole Mediterranean Sea, bathes, besides the Gulf of Panzano, the high and rocky coast further East, which is one of the most picturesque landscapes of the entire Italian peninsula. The geographic Karst Region, behind the city of Trieste, is “unique” on a planetary level. For this reasons, in 19<sup>th</sup> Century it was given the name of *Carsismo* to describe this natural phenomenon; the composition of the soil is basically limestone that can

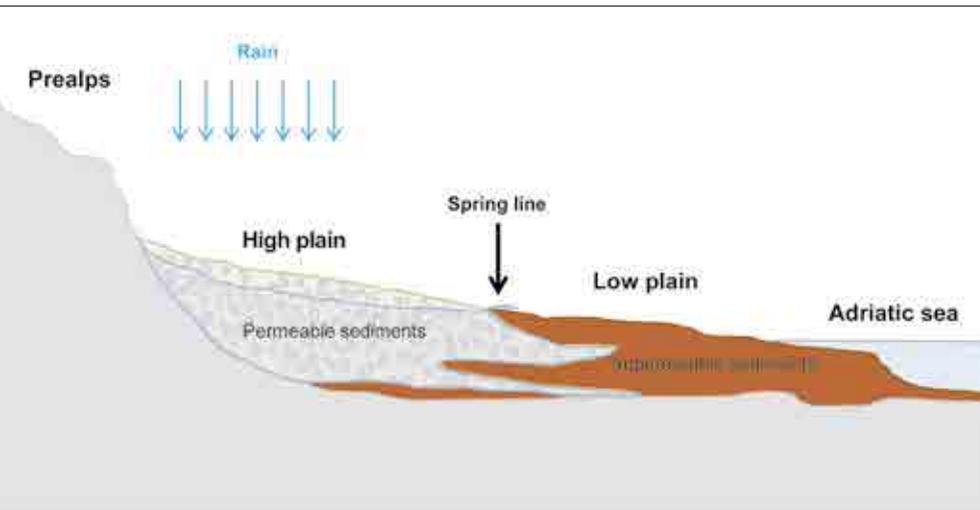
be solubilised by the rainwater, abundant in this area. The underlying and fissured strata ease the penetration of water into the ground giving life to many and fascinating natural phenomena, from furrowed ground to sinkholes, to real abysses.

### The geological history

The orographic system of Friuli Venezia Giulia is formed by three mountain ranges, which can be distinguished on the basis of their origin, evolution and rocks (lithology) that compose them. The first,

Orography of the region. The region is composed of three orographic systems: the Carnic (Paleo-) range, the Southern Alps and Outer Dinarides. The Carnic (Paleo-) range dates back to 350 million years ago and is composed of ancient sedimentary limestone and terrigenous (clay, marl and sandstone) rocks (Paleozoic). The Southern Alps include Julian Alps, as well as the Carnic and Julian Prealps. They originated 77-55 million years ago (Neo-Alpine phase) and are composed of limestone and dolomite rocks. The Outer Dinarides date back to the Alpine orogeny which occurred 35 million years ago. They include the Karst. They are formed by recent rocks (Eocene). The plain is divided by a line (belt) of Risorgive, which allows the identification of two parts: the Upper Plain in the North and the Lower Plain in the South.

defined as the Carnic (Paleo-) range, was formed during the Hercynian orogeny, which occurred around 350 million years ago. This range extends West-East from Mt Elmo/Helm to Caravanche for around 180 km and North-South depth of only 15 km, where the Pesarina, Calda, Pontaiba and Pontebba Valleys are aligned. These mountains are characterised by ancient (Paleozoic) sedimentary rocks, calcareous and terrigenous (clay, marl and sandstone) rocks which, in the westernmost zones, have partially modified (metamorphosed). The highest peaks are located in the western region (towards Veneto) and include the mountains Volaia, Coglians (2,780 m above sea level, which is the highest peak) and Creta di Collina. The second Alpine range corresponds to the easternmost part of the Southeastern Alps, extending



Simplified geo-morphological profile (North-South) of the Friulian Plain. The Upper Plain is formed by a gravelly and permeable subsoil which collects rainwater and water coming from the Prealps. This water penetrates into the ground where it reaches impermeable strata underneath to be conveyed toward the south where it emerges on the surface at the line of the *Risorgive*. The Lower Plain has an impermeable soil consisting mainly of silt and clay. The water that emerges from the ground (*olje*, pools, streams) then flows into waterways (the Stella River, for example) which flows out into the Adriatic Sea.

from the southern boundary of the Carnic range up to the Morainic hills, which demarcate the Friulian Plain. It includes the Julian Alps, as well as the Carnic and Julian Prealps with Mesozoic rocks, that are generally limestone-dolomite. These mountains were formed after the Paleocarnic range, during the Nealpine phase of orogeny. The main peaks are located in the Julian Alps (Jôf di Montasio, Jôf Fuart, Mangart, and Canin). Finally, Collio and Karst are located in the north-western part of the Outer Dinarides. Formed at the beginning of the Alpine orogeny phase (35 million years ago), this area does not have high mountains. They consist of more recent rocks (Eocene) of two types: terrigenous sedimentary rocks beds (Flysch) in the Collio; and limestone rocks in Karst. The current regional geomorpho-

logical configuration, below the Alps and the Prealps, is the result of the more recent geological history of Europe. A history that began around 1.8 million years ago (Quaternary Period, Pleistocene Epoch), when our continent was interested by five major glacial periods called Donau, Günz, Mindel, Riss and Würm, from the names of the main rivers of Bavaria. These cold periods, of different duration, were followed by as many more interglacial (hot) phases, which had a great impact throughout Europe. The last two glaciations (Riss and Würm) particularly affected the Alpine area, where they caused the formation of glaciers, which extended up to a good part of the current Padan Plain. This phenomenon also covers this region, where the influence of the latter (Würm), which ended around 10,000 years ago, is

of particular importance.

At the time of its maximum expansion, the glacier – called *Tilaventino* – arrived to the area of the current outskirts of Udine, reaching 1,000 m in height in the innermost zone. After the phase of advancement, there began a slow but steady retreat (between 14,000 and 12,000 years ago), which had important repercussions on the morphology of the current territory, on the nature of the soil and subsoil, as well as on the hydrography. The waters from the melting ice carried an immense amount of debris downstream, which were deposited south of the mountain range, causing the accumulation of material with an increasingly finer granulometry as it approached the sea. This phenomenon is the result of the combined action of fluvio-glacial sedimentation and erosion, carried by the river so that it became a “footprint” of the ancient glacier.

The Morainic amphitheatre of the Tagliamento consists of three main circles of modest height, which were formed with the transport and subsequent deposit of debris from the *Tilaventino* glacier.

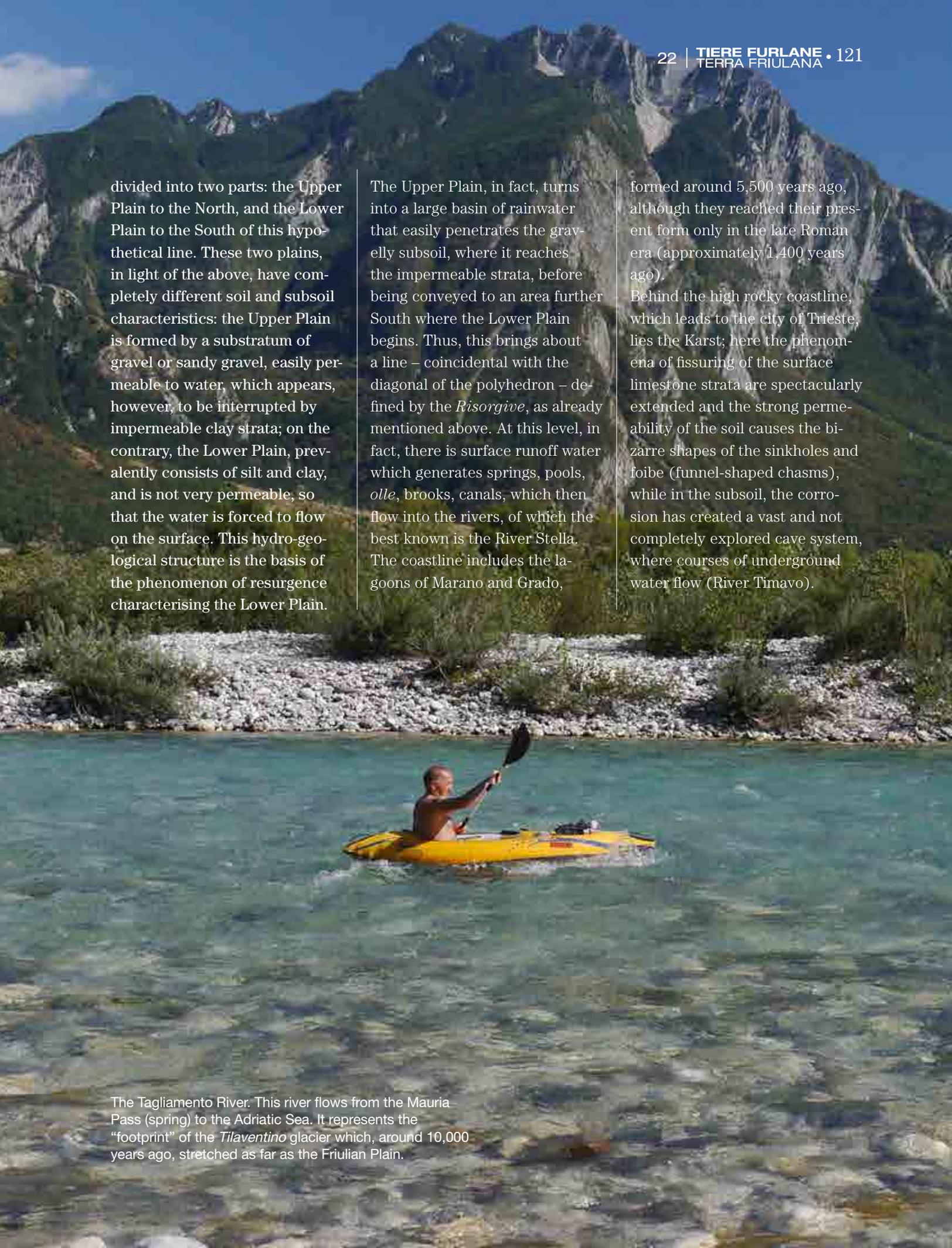
The Friulian Plain ideally forms a polygon (with five sides). One can draw a hypothetical diagonal, which has the locality of Polcenigo as the starting point and the Valle Cavanata as the end point, passing through the settlements of Pordezone, San Vito al Tagliamento, Codroipo, Bertolo, Palmanova, and Aquileia. This plain can be

divided into two parts: the Upper Plain to the North, and the Lower Plain to the South of this hypothetical line. These two plains, in light of the above, have completely different soil and subsoil characteristics: the Upper Plain is formed by a substratum of gravel or sandy gravel, easily permeable to water, which appears, however, to be interrupted by impermeable clay strata; on the contrary, the Lower Plain, prevalently consists of silt and clay, and is not very permeable, so that the water is forced to flow on the surface. This hydro-geological structure is the basis of the phenomenon of resurgence characterising the Lower Plain.

The Upper Plain, in fact, turns into a large basin of rainwater that easily penetrates the gravelly subsoil, where it reaches the impermeable strata, before being conveyed to an area further South where the Lower Plain begins. Thus, this brings about a line – coincidental with the diagonal of the polyhedron – defined by the *Risorgive*, as already mentioned above. At this level, in fact, there is surface runoff water which generates springs, pools, *olle*, brooks, canals, which then flow into the rivers, of which the best known is the River Stella. The coastline includes the lagoons of Marano and Grado,

formed around 5,500 years ago, although they reached their present form only in the late Roman era (approximately 1,400 years ago).

Behind the high rocky coastline, which leads to the city of Trieste, lies the Karst; here the phenomena of fissuring of the surface limestone strata are spectacularly extended and the strong permeability of the soil causes the bizarre shapes of the sinkholes and foibe (funnel-shaped chasms), while in the subsoil, the corrosion has created a vast and not completely explored cave system, where courses of underground water flow (River Timavo).



The Tagliamento River. This river flows from the Mauria Pass (spring) to the Adriatic Sea. It represents the “footprint” of the *Tilaventino* glacier which, around 10,000 years ago, stretched as far as the Friulian Plain.

### *To the Tagliamento*

*O Tagliamento, who through Friuli go  
as though to pasture on your gravelly bed,  
now that you roar, with swollen waters fed,  
do you recall the leaping of the roe?*

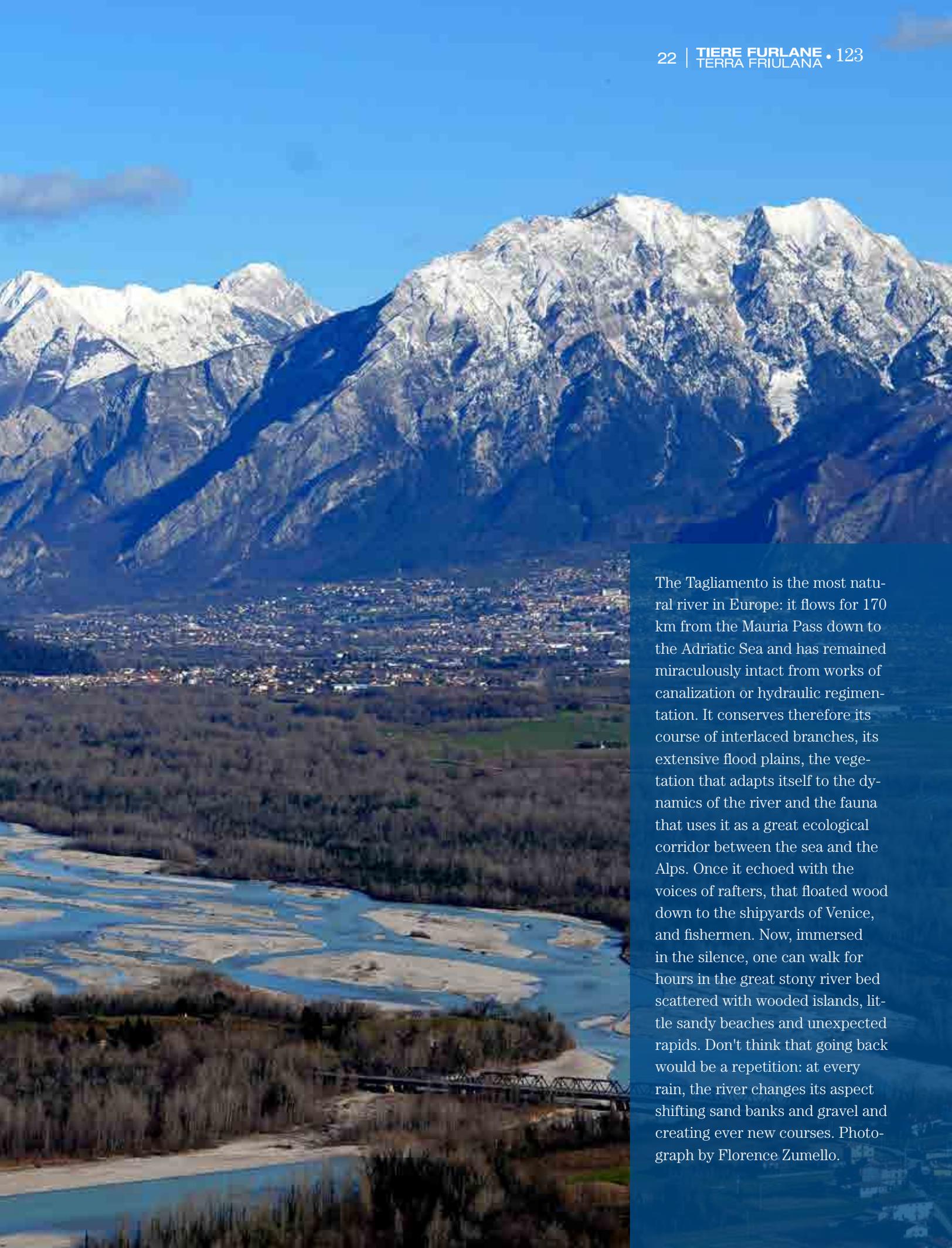
*Up there where like a brook you humbly flow,  
the girls would ford you with an easy tread,  
and round their feet upon your way you sped  
with nimble waters babbling light and low.*

*But on your journey down, you draw your due  
from many little streams, and swoll'n with  
these,  
you take possession of Friuli there.*

*Beyond your bed, half-hidden to the view,  
a bell-tower peeps from out the poplar-trees,  
and through the darkness calls to evening-  
prayer.*

Bindo Chiurlo (1886 - 1943), Friulian poet and professor of Italian.





The Tagliamento is the most natural river in Europe: it flows for 170 km from the Mauria Pass down to the Adriatic Sea and has remained miraculously intact from works of canalization or hydraulic regimentation. It conserves therefore its course of interlaced branches, its extensive flood plains, the vegetation that adapts itself to the dynamics of the river and the fauna that uses it as a great ecological corridor between the sea and the Alps. Once it echoed with the voices of rafters, that floated wood down to the shipyards of Venice, and fishermen. Now, immersed in the silence, one can walk for hours in the great stony river bed scattered with wooded islands, little sandy beaches and unexpected rapids. Don't think that going back would be a repetition: at every rain, the river changes its aspect shifting sand banks and gravel and creating ever new courses. Photograph by Florence Zumello.



Julian Alps (left) and Carnic Alps (right). One of the most important mountains of the Julian Alps is the Jôf di Montasio (2,753 m above sea level). Formed by limestone rocks, at high altitudes it hosts modest vegetation on rocks and scree (Photograph by Stefano Zanini). In the Carnic Alps, as in the Giramondo Pass, siliceous substrata are present which generate enough soil to allow the development of meadows and pastures.

### The climate

Even considering the climate, which characterises the geographical region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, it can be spoken of particular specificity in this extreme north-eastern corner of Italy, due to superimposition of the influences of the Mediterranean, Central European and Balkan Areas.

This territory, albeit limited, offers a surprising variety of climatic conditions, being inserted between the Alps and the Mediterranean Sea within a few dozen kilometres. As a result, there is a continental micro-climate but together with a Mediterranean, Alpine and sub-Alpine climate.

Overall, the climate is moderately continental characterised by high humidity, due to rather abundant rainfall in the Plain, especially at the foothills of the Alps on the Southern slope of the Musi Mountains, where it is even held the European record.

The Bora wind is another “legend” of the regional climate, a phenomenon that has inspired pages of literature and cinema. It is a dry and cold continental wind, which descends violently, especially in winter, from the Karst Plateau on the city of Trieste and its surroundings. This occurs because of the climatic influence of the warm sea, which creeps within the European continent and clashes with the cold currents coming from the Sava Valley, a tributary of the Danube (Slovenia) to cross through the Selva di Tarnova and Monte Nevoso and then to descend on the Gulf of Trieste. In the city, the gusts of the Bora can even reach 170 km/hour.

Temperatures during the year are generally mild, because the region is placed, due to its geographical position, in a temperate climate zone. In the Plain, for example, it is rare for the minimum temper-

ature to fall below  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  and the maximum to rise above  $33^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

The mountain area – with typically Alpine character and severe winter temperatures, especially in the Julian Alps – shelter the region from the stiff winds of northern Europe, while the physical contiguity with the Padan Plain favours the general circulation of air masses from the West to the East.

The hundred and fifty kilometres of coastline pose a strong influence on climate of the region, thanks to the Southern sector of the winds (the Scirocco), accentuated by the evaporation of the sea.

### Biodiversity

The great geomorphological, climatic and soil variability, results in an extraordinary variety of natural environments – 250 have been described – which seems to be associated with an exceptional bio-diversity – understood as



Endemics and rare species of the Alps. In these mountains significant species of rare beauty can be found: *Wulfenia carinthiaca*, native of Montenegro; *Gentiana froelichii* subsp. *zenari* and *Papaver julicum*, endemic species of screes.

being the collective whole of organisms which interact with each other and with the environment in which they live.

If Italy holds the record in Europe for its rich bio-diversity, this region is, in turn, one of the richest. It includes 3,094 species of phanerogams (flowering plants) and ferns (plants that reproduce by spores), 675 bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and 1,094 lichens. Mushrooms include 2,145 species, while land and fresh water fauna is formed by 19,648 species of vertebrates and invertebrates.

The importance of the regional bio-diversity is evident. On an area of just over 2.5 % of Italian soil, lives around half of the flora and a third of the fauna of the country. This region is distinguished, therefore, for a high number of endemics – species which are exclusive to a given territory, some of which originated during the last

Ice Age. The fauna includes approximately 180 endemics, while for flora approximately 50 species and sub-species have been described.

This amazing wealth of life forms is, as has been mentioned, undoubtedly linked at the great variety of the regional territory, but also to its unique geographical position, located in the intersection among the Germanic, Slavic and Latin-Mediterranean areas. This has undoubtedly favoured the arrival of species to this region through natural phenomena, or as a consequence of the movement of man in the course of his migration. Particularly important was the influence of species from the Illyrian-Balkan area, which is one of the richest in bio-diversity on the European continent.

The wildlife offers particularly interesting examples of these dynamics which, in the moun-

tain area and the foothills of the region, sees the presence of consolidated and sometimes sporadic rare or very rare species for the Italian peninsula, such as the brown bear, the wolf, the jackal and the lynx among mammals, while some birds have been recently reintroduced: the griffon vulture and the stork.

### **The natural environment and the endemic plants**

As can be seen, this region has an incredible variety of environments. In a rather limited area, through a route of approximately 100 km from North to South, from the Alpine range to the Adriatic Sea, one can describe Alpine environments, mountains, hills, plains, until one reaches the lagoons of Grado and Marano, Karst, and the rocky coast of Trieste.

In the mountain environment, the Carnic and Julian Alps offer



Dwarf Mountain Pine (left) and Spruce (right). The Dwarf Mountain Pine (*Pinus mugo*, Dolomiti Pesarine) is a woody species in a prostrate form which marks the edge of the treeline. At lower altitudes, woods of *Picea abies* (Fir) are widespread, which form important forests such as that of Val Meluzzo (Val Cimoliana). Even further down, one finds beech, very widespread mesophilic woods, which are dominated by *Fagus sylvatica* (e.g. Val Dogna, Chiusaforte, Val d'Arzino).

impressive high-altitude environments from which it is possible to look at wonderful views. Some of these mountains have an altitude around 2,700 m.

At these altitudes vegetation is sporadic. Only in the screes it can be found herbaceous communities of great aesthetic impact linked to the vibrant colours of the flowers. At lower altitudes and on siliceous substrata, soils have been able to allow the establishment of a relatively rich vegetation: the Alpine meadow pastures. *Gentiana froelichii* subsp. *zenari*, with blue corollas, *Papaver julicum*, with its brilliant white petals, and *Ranunculus traunfelneri* with white corollas grow on the screes. On the

high meadows, in the grass of the Nassfeld Pass, one can find a species that is rather rare, the *Wulfenia carinthiaca*. This is an Illyrian species, which represents a classic example of a plant with separated punctiform areal (diffusion zone of a species), that is widespread in the Carnic Alps, although its area of main diffusion is distant (Montenegro).

Below this environment one encounters formations of *Pinus mugo* (Mugo Pine), which form the edge of the treeline (bear in mind that in the region the altitudinal limit of forest vegetation is lower than in the rest of the Alpine range). On the North facing slopes and on acidic soil, formations of

Green Alder (*Alnus viridis*) can be noted. Going further down toward the valley, the first woodlands come into view: the *peccete* (Spruce forests), formed by Red Spruce / Fir (*Picea abies*); the *lariceti* (Larch forests), whose dominant species is the European Larch (*Larix decidua*); and the impressive *faggete*, forests of Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), a combination of great naturalistic and economic value. Beech may also form mixed forests with the Silver Fir (*Abies alba*) in the wettest areas, or with the Red Spruce / Fir if the soil is shallow.

In the foothills of the Alps, the wide diffusion of limestone and dolomitic substrata has formed ground that



Carnic Prealps (left, view from Tomba di Mereto) and Julian Prealps (right, view from Tarcento). The Prealps form a range that extends to the South of the Carnic and Julian Alps, giving rise to a mountain range clearly visible from the Plain and the Castle of Udine, the symbol of Friuli.

is little developed, especially on the slopes facing South, where the influence of the oceanic climate is strongest felt. Here, the abundant presence of Black Pine (*Pinus nigra*) is characteristic. This species mainly grows spontaneously in Friuli Venezia Giulia, while it is possibly absent in the rest of Northern Italy. The presence of the Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) should be noted; a plant typical of the Mediterranean area which, in the Gemonese area, has its northernmost presence in Europe.

We can note the presence of several endemics even in the Prealpine zone. *Spiraea decumbens* and *Medicago pironae* grow among the rocks – the latter

species dedicated to the Friulian naturalist Giulio Andrea Pirona – while in the discontinuous Alpine meadows one can see the beautiful *Gentiana froelichii* and in the meadows with tall grasses, *Aconitum angustifolium*.

The mountains which circle the upper Friulian Plain on the orographic right-hand side of the Tagliamento River often descend directly onto the plain. On the orographic left instead, the slow retreat of the *Tilaventino* glacier resulted in the release of moraines which today form a hilly “crown” around the mouth of the river itself from the circle of mountains. Here, the charming landscape is typically adorned by

woodlands of Manna Ash (*Fraxinus ornus*) and Hop Hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*), with the ever-present Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*).

The transition zone from the mountain to the plain in the area occupied by the Valli del Torre and Natisone is very different, densely wooded, with “historical” forest growth of Oak and Chestnut trees. However, in recent decades, the extended presence of flysch soil in an area characterised by abundant rainfall has meant that Ash-Sycamore woods have asserted themselves, being formed by Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).



Morainic hills in Tricesimo (black and white photograph) and the Eocene hills in Spessa di Cividale (below). The morainic hills form an amphitheatre created by the withdrawal of the Tilaentino glacier (on the background the Julian Prealps). The Eocene hills stem from the orographic phenomena which occurred during the Eocene period.

In the woods of these valleys, there is another significant endemic species, the *Leontodon hispidus* subsp. *brumatii*. In the upper Friulian Plain, the area of *Magredi* is very interesting, with rough pastures or steppes and settled on alluvial, gravelly soil. These meadows are rich in species of considerable value with important endemics, or characteristic species in limited areas, such as: *Brassica*

*glabrescens*, on the left-hand side of the *Magredi* (Pordenone); *Matthiola fruticulosa* subsp. *valesiaca*, a pretty mustard flower; *Polygala nicaeensis* subsp. *forojuliensis*; *Euphorbia triflora*, subsp. *kernerii*; *Knautia resmannii*; and *Centaurea dichroantha*, a species characteristic of the primitive *Magredi*, which also hosts some orchids of rare beauty, amongst which are the *Orchis* and the *Ophrys*.

The wide Friulian Plain is crossed diagonally by the *Risorgive* line: to the South, the artesian phenomena of the emergence of water to the surface are frequent. The entire lower Friuli is characterized by a landscape determined by land reclamation and re-organisation which, over the decades, has simplified the use of land. This area still shows a significant presence of wet meadows, *olle* (round springs in the ground

*Magredi* (above) and *Risorgive* (below). The *Magredi* extend north of the *Risorgive* line and rest on gravelly and permeable substrata. They host vegetation that is rich in endemic and rare species (Photograph by Stefano Fabian). The *Risorgive* mark the beginning of the Lower Plain. The abundance of water has favoured the development of a lush herbaceous and arboreal vegetation which can still be seen in some protected areas.



named after a Roman clay pot), lowland alkaline fens, and water courses which host numerous species of great importance. Among them, two endemics are very apparent: *Erucastrum palustre*, similar to the common rapeseed, and *Armeria helodes* with its pretty pink inflorescences, which grow in the peat bogs. They are two exclusive species of this environment, to which the *Centurea forojuliensis* is added.

Then, there are also some “glacial relicts” exemplified by the *Pinquicula alpina* and the *Primula farinosa*. These species survived the last deglaciation precisely because the surface water throughout the year guarantees constant humidity and temperature conditions (around 14 °C) of the soil. True environmental “jewels” of the lower Friulian plain are the lowland woods, now reduced to little more than five hundred hec-

tares due to human pressure, that are today preserved, with their woodlands of Hornbeam and Oak trees, dominated by the common European Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and the Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*).

Particularly striking is the landscape of the great expanse of the lagoon which, from the mouth of the Tagliamento River to the mouth of the Isonzo, frames the views of the sea of Lower Friuli.



Endemics and rare species of the *Magredi*. The low-yielding pastures are home to important species among which: *Matthiola fruticulosa* subsp. *valesiaca*, a pretty mustard flower; *Polygala nicaeensis* subsp. *forojuliensis*; *Centaurea dichroantha*, a characteristic species in the primitive *Magredi*.



Endemics and rare species of the *Risorgive* belt. This area is home to lush arboreous, scrub and herbaceous vegetation. The most significant species are the *Erucastrum palustre* and *Armeria helodes*, two endemics which are exclusive to this area and which grow in bogs. There are many orchids and some species known as "glacial relicts" because they survived the last Ice Age, among which is the *Pinguicula alpina*.



The Grado and Marano Lagoon. It is a unique environment formed by small sand bars, separated by mouths and sandbanks (small islands) that separate the open sea from the rear zone which is rich in valleys of brackish water fed by freshwater from the rivers of Risorgive. It includes some naturalistic areas of great value.



The suspended load of rivers, re-distributed by the action of the sea, have led to the formation of small sandbars, separated from each other only through “mouths” or “ports”, which separate the open sea from the widespread surfaces of brackish water of the lagoon, shallow and rich in fresh water from the *Risorgive* rivers. On the sandbanks (small islands) and along the shoreline, endemic species grow, such as *Salicornia veneta* and *Centaurea tomassinii*.

Following the development of the sandy coast toward the east, one can appreciate the massive limestone cliffs of the Trieste coast,

behind which stands the vegetation of the Karst region.

The dominant plant formation is the Karst Illyrian brushwood, which is characterised by the presence of Downy Oak (*Quercus pubescens*), European Hornbeam and Manna Ash (*Fraxinus ornus*); the presence of Black Pine is actually due to the intervention of the Austro-Hungarian forestry authorities who happily recognised the potential of pioneering this plant in such a poor environment. Between the thickets, there are also some moorlands which host the *Biscutella laevigata* subsp. *hispidissima*. On the rocky cliffs, which are more exposed to

the sun and the sea, one can see the presence of the northernmost Mediterranean scrubland in Europe, with the Holm Oak, as well as the Terebinth (*Pistacia terebinthus*), Phillyrea (*Phillyrea latifolia-angustifolia*) and the Oriental Hornbeam (*Carpinus orientalis*), but especially the endemic *Centaurea kartschiana*, typical of the sunny cliffs overlooking the sea.

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Photographs by F. Boscutti, V. Casolo, M. De Luca, E. Petrusa, S. Podrecca, G. Simonetti, A. Vianello and M. Zancani.



Karst (right) and the rocky coast of Trieste (left). Karst is characterised by extensive phenomena of subterranean water flow which has given rise to caves, dolines, sinkholes and various cavities, making it an environment which is unique in its kind (Photograph by Stefano Zanini). This area extends up to the high and rocky coast of the Gulf of Trieste, rich in cliffs placed on the edge of the sea.

Gabriella BUCCO

# Wine & Art

The Art of Wine in Friuli,  
this is how a Winery  
becomes an Art Gallery

Vines and vineyards have been painted by famous artists such as Caravaggio and many exhibitions and books have been organized and written on the subject, but in recent years many wine makers have enriched their wineries with works of art in order to improve their business and display artistic culture.

With Enos Costantini we have travelled from winery to winery interviewing wine producers and vineyard owners.

We have discovered some examples in Friuli of wine tourism that is developing more and more. This is 'work in progress' that is to be completed and that I couldn't avoid mentioning – please forgive me.

A detail of an embossement by Darko Bevilacqua in the cellar of *Cantina Produttori Cormons*.



## THE BULFON WINERY: a strong connection between old native vines and art heritage

Emilio Bulfon's vineyards spread over the hills between Castelnovo del Friuli and Pinzano al Tagliamento, overlooking the banks of the Tagliamento River. This is an ancient land, rich in history and art.

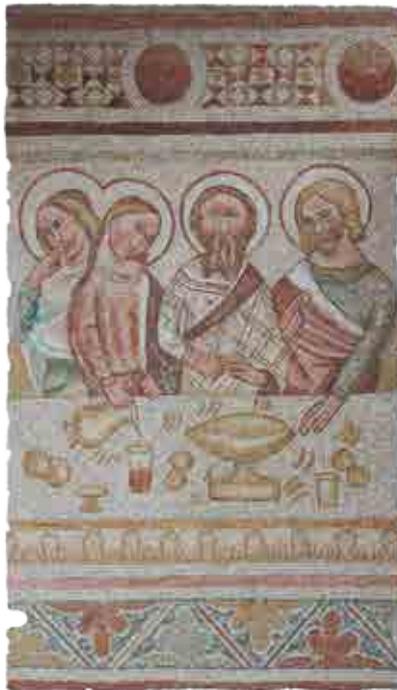
The Bulfon winery is located in Valeriano, a small village whose three churches were painted by Pordenone, probably the most important Renaissance painter in Friuli.

The Bulfon winery also respects the local art and the historical heritage, 9 of the 16 hectares are grown with old native vine varieties, recovered by Emilio Bulfon in recent years. Vines have ancient names: Ucelùt, Piculit Neri, Sciaglìn, Forgiarin, Cjanorie, Cividin, Cordenossa.

There is a connection between good wine, art and beautiful landscapes. So, along the road to the farm, a coat of arms shows the way to the winery. It represents, obviously, a grape, made with glass mosaic, a complimentary artistic tribute to mosaic art, carried on with increasing success in the nearby town of Spilimbergo. Proud of its artistic heritage, the Bulfon art collection includes many works of art by Nane Zavagno, a well-known artist who lives in an old village nearby, Borgo Ampiano. Nane Zavagno (San Giorgio della Richinvelda, 1932) attended the Mosaic School in Spilimbergo and his teacher was



A stone sculpture by Nane Zavagno, inspired by Minimal Art. The geometric modules are strictly connected with the landscape.



Giovanni Pastorutti's mosaic (1999) representing *The Last Supper*, which became the winery's logo also used on the bottle labels. The iconography is drawn from a popular fresco in the church of Santa Maria dei Battuti in Valeriano, dating back to the end of the 14th century.

Mario De Luigi, one of the best known modern painters in Venice, an abstract art enthusiast. Zavagno changed the way of making mosaic. Instead of glass coloured *tessere* (little square glass pieces), Zavagno used new materials: the stones found in the Tagliamento

river, brick, coal. He cut them into small pieces and arranged them in circular shapes, called *soli* or *rossoni*, because they recall the rose windows in the façades of Gothic churches. The traditional mosaic changed from painting with stones to something quite new, abstract art, suitable to modern times and architecture. In the 1960s Zavagno met Getulio Alviani, a well-known optical art artist, and his sculptures became geometrical, with standard elements fitted together.

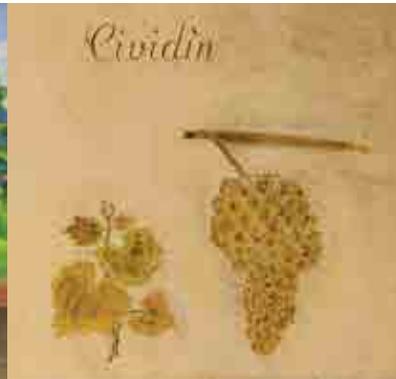
On the way in, below the coat of arms, there is a big Zavagno stone sculpture, named Simbionte: two architectural shapes leaning on each on the other since, in Minimal Art, sculptures are strictly connected with the landscape. Inside the winery you can admire a mosaic by Zavagno, a gorgeous white rose, made with stones of different sizes broken in half. Outside there are some objects collected from old buildings, ruined by the earthquake in 1976: an old stone sink and a tabernacle with an old symbol, named king Salomon's rose, a good luck symbol in the Friulian tradition. A mosaic was made in 1999 by Rino Pastorutti (Palmanova, 1942), teacher and director (1975-1994) of the famous Mosaic School in Spilimbergo), where he portrayed *The Last Supper*, which became the winery's logo. The iconography is drawn from a popular fresco (1350 ca.) in the church of Santa Maria dei Battuti in Valeriano: three apostles in the foreground, one of them is



A painting by Plinio Missana (Pinzano, 1946) shows the harvest and the work in the cellar. In the middle, on the top of the hill you can see the castle of Savorgnan.

pouring wine into a glass, they surround Jesus who is breaking bread, in front, there is a table set with glasses, jugs and loaves of bread. Pastorutti used stones found in the Tagliamento River and only the green ones are made of glass. The same image was chosen by Emilio Bulfon as a logo for his farm and to decorate the labels of the bottles of wine produced in the winery since 1990. Emilio Bulfon designed them, all highlighting a strong tie between wine, art and art heritage.

In the garden there is another sculpture, a readymade one invented by Emanuele Bertossi, a graphic artist as well as a land artist, who lives near Maniago, in Poffabro, one of the most beautiful villages in Italy. He wants to give new life to the objects people



Cividin is one of native vine varieties, recovered by Emilio Bulfon in recent years. It is painted on a wall inside the cellar together with all the vine's shoots and grapes of the varieties grown in the farm.

throw away so he collects old iron tools transforming them into new shapes. An old tube therefore becomes a tree trunk on which you can see an owl, made of discarded iron and a lot of imagination.

Inside, on the walls of the cellar there are decorative paintings of vine shoots, grapes and flowers grown in the farm. Emilio Bulfon painted them with an educational purpose: in actual fact, the winery is an educational farm ("fattoria didattica") approved by ERSA (Ente Regionale per lo Sviluppo dell'Agricoltura - Regional Institution for Agricultural Development) and it is a member of the Wine Tourism Movement.

A painting by Plinio Missana shows the work in the vineyard and in the cellar. The artist (Pinzano, 1946) painted several

landscapes of the Tagliamento countryside. On the walls other paintings are linked to the history of wine: etchings and oil paintings by Giorgio Gomirato, Federica Pagnucco, Tonino Cragnolini, Virgilio Tramontin, an ancient wood engraving printed by Stamperia Remondini, floral air brushed patterns decorate ceramic plates, made by the famous Galvani factory in Pordenone in the 1930s and 1940s.

Hundreds of *taste-vin* from France are collected in the winery, not only the usual silver cups, but also earthenware and pewter ones.

The Bulfon collection reveals the artistic tastes of Alberta Maria, the daughter of Emilio, a well-known historian, but also the family's strong ties with the territory.

### LIS FADIS: how a winery becomes an art gallery

The farm owners have always been passionate about Carnia and its legends, especially about sprites. Vanilla Plozner's family comes from Carnia and in 1953 her father Lisio invented the piezoelectric lighter and his industries developed electronic devices. Vanilla and her husband realized their dream: to own a small wine business among the hills around Cividale. The name Lis Fadis means The Fairies in Friulian language. A fairy is the winery logo, made by a venetian craftsman in stained glass, on a design by Alfonse Mucha (1860 - 1939), a Czech Art Nouveau



Urban was Archbishop of Langres in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, he struggled against innkeepers in order to claim a right on a church. He is always depicted with a bunch of grapes in his hands.

painter and decorative artist.

A blonde lady in profile, with ribbons and flowers in her hair is framed by vine leaves and bunches: she is the winery logo.

The small house, dating back to the end of the eighteenth century, has been restored using traditional materials as old stones and timber beams. Near the house, the cellar has been built with the stones pulled up from the nearby hill, terraced for the establishing of a vineyard. The old and new buildings, perfectly suited to the landscapes, are surrounded by more than 200 old fruit trees, collected from farmers and deserted orchards. They are grown in an organic way. You can sit under them on old cast iron benches, coming from an estate of Queen Elisabeth II.

The wine farm is unique respect-



On a sacristy cupboard of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the sculpture of Saint Urban, patron of winegrowers rules the cellar, on the shelf there are some glasses cut with grapes and vine leaves, some ancient glass lamps and, in the middle, some glass tools used for tasting wine from the barrel.



A hand operated sulphurator (still containing sulphur) of a old factory in Clauzetto.

ing the owner's culture tastes: Alessandro Marcorin, a former pharmaceutical manager, was an antiquary and so now his whole collection is shown inside the buildings, a kind of living antiquarian shop.

Wine machinerie and old tools are set in the cellar, among them a

wooden machine with soft grinding wheels used to pulp grapes. The first room of the cellar is the wine-fermentation room, which houses wooden and cement casks and an old holy water stoup. The wine-fermentation room also gives access to the wilting room, through a gate made by using an eighteenth-century iron grille. Downstairs is the wine cellar. Where visitors are immediately struck by the two wooden-framed glass cases dating back to the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, which contain a splendid collection of grappa bottles, glasses and snuff boxes dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The bottles were collected in Alto Adige and German countries, some are moulded in cast, other are painted.



The sculpture represents Saint Urban, the patron of winegrowers and coopers. The wooden statue dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century that recalls Gothic art.

On the walls you can admire two paintings connected with wine: on wood, the Italian allegory of wealth, a woman with cornucopia; on the opposite another painting, bought in Graz, shows the same subject in a Flemish interpretation: a young woman at the window between grapes and a monkey. Another collection includes cut glasses from a sacristy cupboard of the 18<sup>th</sup> century representing grapes and vine leaves, which have a religious meaning; near there are some transparent ancient glass lamps, while a 16<sup>th</sup> century



The painting shows the Flemish allegory of wealth: a young woman at the window between grapes and a monkey.

wooden statue of Saint Urban, the saint patron of winegrowers, rules over the whole cellar. The vaulted ceiling is made with 19<sup>th</sup> century pink bricks carefully laid by skilled artisans. As it was done in the Middle Ages, a cloth rope was laid in-between the vaults to prevent mortar from being affected by gravity.

Visitors can see two mid-European wine presses dating back to two-three hundred years ago, a hand-operated sulphurator (still containing sulphur!) of a legendary factory of Clauzetto, two donkey vats, two handmade corking machines produced in a Friulian house about a century ago. Wine tasting takes place around a round table, which is an oil grindstone from Puglia dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the walls are painted, as if they were frescoes, the oval pictures of the mischievous elves which have lent their name to the wine: *Bergul*, hidden by leaves, makes stum-

bling people looking for wood and strawberries, gives its name to a red wine; *Guriut* is a thief, lives in the caves and eats plenty of cream and cheese; *Sbilfs* are everywhere and nowhere in the wood, you can hear them because they wear caps with small bells; *Gian* is a strong elf, he helps wood cutters and loves cheese and Merlot wine, *Mazzarot* lives near the mountain brooks together with *Pesarul* and *Braulín*.



Art in wine cellars was started in 1980. The first barrels were more rounded than the later ones. In 1983 Gastone Marizza painted this barrel in a naïve style and he dedicated it to the Friulian winegrowers.

## CANTINA PRODUTTORI CORMONS:

### a Territory and a Cellar where Art meets Wine

Since 1980 in the *Cantina Produttori Cormons* (Cormons Winegrowers' Winery) wine goes side by side with art.

The winery was founded in the late 1960s by 150 winegrowers in a territory crossed by the Isonzo river, not far from Gorizia.



Cesare Mocchiutti (Villanova Judrio 1916 - Mossa 2006) was an important artist in Gorizia. He exhibited in Rome, Padova and liked to depict the peasant world, poachers, hunters and animals like the owls painted on this barrel.

In 1980 *Art in wine cellars* was invented: several artists, mainly working in Friuli, painted the gigantic barrels in their personal style, each one different from the other. Every painter decorated the bottom of the barrels, freely expressing his aptitude. Some expressed themselves in the abstract expressionist style, like Giorgio Celiberti and Mario Baldan who used white brush strokes, Martens used a neon in a Conceptual style, Luciano Ceschia painted his typical cubistic sculptures. Enrico Bay created an ironic sculpture putting together pieces of wood and ropes.

Other painters preferred a figurative style: Agostino de Romanis; Gastone Marizza painted a naïve snowy landscape; Cesare Mocchiutti gave shape to lively owls; Fred Pittino painted his traditional figures; Tony Zanussi, Giancarlo Caneva, Ivan Crico, Arrigo Buttazzoni, Giulio Paolini,



The barrel, painted in 2006 by Giovanni Cavazon, has an oval shape like his last ones. Female nude wooden cut-outs are embossed on a painted Bacchus in the background.

Gianna Marini, Giorgio Benedetti, Paolo Menon, Mario Ceroli, Roberto Joos painted other barrels. Some artists painted more than one barrel, like Giovanni Cavazon who in the 1980s painted a charming female nude surrounded by grapes and flowers, a contemporary goddess that is reminiscent of Titian's *Baccanali* and in 2006 applied two wood-carved female nudes to a background with a painted Bacchus. The big barrels, painted between the 1980s and the year 2006, are stored in the wine cellar thus making it look like an unusual gallery of modern art.

## Artists for the Wine of Peace

Always in the 1980s, right in the area where two wars broke out, the idea of a Wine of Peace took shape. In 1983 the *Cantina Produttori Cormons* planted a two hectare-wide Peace Vineyard, 6500 *barbatelle* (this is how the young grafted vines are called) collected from universities, private owners, botanical gardens and nurseries. In the vineyard there are 700 different varieties of grapes, from 3 to 5 specimens for each variety. Every plant has been catalogued and in 1985 more than 500 people, among them students from the United World College of the Adriatic in Duino, celebrated the first vintage. Since 1985 the *Cantina Produttori Cormons* produces the Wine of Peace, an off-the-skins fermentation blend, from both red and white grapes. The Wine of Peace comes in packs of three bottles and each item is sent to the leaders of all the countries recognized by the Italian Republic. The first batch was sent on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1986 and the Wine of Peace is still produced and sent. The bottles are decorated with labels drawn by famous artists, known all over the world, in order to advertise the wine in the most effective way.

Every year, three well-known artists draw the labels, thereby setting up one of the largest label collections in the world. In 1986 Enrico Bay, Zoran Music and Gio Pomodoro were chosen and to this day, more than 90 artists have

drawn the Peace Wine labels. Since 1990, famous poems and songs, that suitably match the design, have been printed on the labels. Cormons's artistic IDs are a way of communicating wine culture all over the world.

Some artists who painted barrels also have also drawn some labels, such as, Arrigo Buttazzoni, an accomplished colourist as well as a graphic artist. In 1995 he was awarded the First Prize in the "Premio nazionale Etichetta d'oro" (Gold Label National Prize). Giorgio Celiberti (Udine, 1929) also painted two barrels, one with hearts and a second one with a goat eating grapes, as well as labels. In 1976 Celiberti gave a performance near Rocca Bernarda, overlaying vines and the ground with painted sheets.

Modern art history is displayed on Wine of Peace labels: the French Nouveaux Réalistes (Arman, Spoerri), Pop Art (Ugo Nespolo, Joe Tilson, Mimmo Rotella, Robert Rauschenberg); performers like Yoko Ono; Abstract Expressionism (Giuseppe Santomaso, Sebastian Matta, Emilio Vedova, Aligi Sassu, Ernesto Treccani); Video Art (Nam June Paik, Fabrizio Plessi); Surrealism with Leonor Fini who grew up in Trieste and is one of the few women in the collection, Conceptual Art (Michelangelo Pistoletto, Gilberto Zorio), contemporary sculptors (Luciano Minguzzi, Giacomo Manzù), Forma group (Pietro Consagra, Pietro Dorazio, Achille Perilli), graphic designers (Walter Valentini, Lucio Del Pezzo, Michel Folon), Realism



The high-relief represents ploughing. Darko moulded it in a sequence including pig slaughtering, grape harvesting, grape-crushing, wheat harvesting.



This is a detail of the embossement representing harvesting. In the upper right corner a man is sharpening the scythe with the hammer. Usually farmers used the “cote”, a stone made to run on the blade, but sometimes you had to knock a portable anvil into the ground, to put the blade on it and then hammer it.



A harvesting detail: a cart carries a vat, inside a man and a woman are pressing grapes holding grapes and a cup of wine. They express a joyful life.

(Franco Dugo, Fernando Botero) Transavanguardia (Mimmo Paladino). Even Dario Fo (Sangiango 1926), winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, in the year 2000 drew his label on which he wrote: “Peace must be drunk in great friendship”.

Recently, Toni Spessot painted a large oil canvass for the office area and some props in front of the Winery.

### **Darko Bevilacqua’s works of art**

In the *Cantina Produttori Cormons*, Darko (Biglie 1948 - Cividale 1991) left many works of art. He was a shy artist, constantly moving between Italy and Slovenia, the Mediterranean and

Eastern Europe. He was a sculptor - who used both clay and bronze - an engraver and a draftsman. Darko attended the Art School in Gorizia and his teachers, Tino Piazza for sculpture and Cesare Mocchiutti for painting, influenced his craftsmanship. He graduated in 1967 and from 1969 to 1979 worked with Giorgio Celiberti, and in Paris met *avant garde* artists. In the same years, he travelled extensively in Greece and in the Region of Lazio discovering and studying Minoan and Etruscan art, whose influence can be found in his essential shapes and narrative figurative embossements. He moved to Cividale in 1975 and opened a workshop where he produced clay and bronze sculptures

which go back to the classical relationship between man and nature. From 1978 to 1979 his art turned into storytelling, and Darko became more and more interested in popular art, religion, legends and myths. From the 1980s onwards Darko moulds many imagines and statues of saints.

Darko’s works of art, owned by the *Cantina Produttori Cormons*, can be dated to his latest period and are unique because the sculptures are connected to graphic prints. He carved a barrel with a Bacchus myth: a young joyful Bacchus with a glass of wine in his hand is sitting on a male goat, a personification of the god himself. Darko painted another barrel, probably dating back to 1991, with

two big angels holding up a bottle of wine. Connected with the barrel is an *aquatint* etching, where Darko represented many angels playing musical instruments. In 1983 - 1984 Darko moulded a big clay embossement representing saint Urban, the patron saint of winegrowers, sitting on a male goat sitting on a vine shoot, a detail similar to the one carved on the first barrel. Urban, a stick figure in the foreground, is raising a goblet in one hand and holding a crosier in the other hand, with grapes winding round it. The clay embossement is a mould for a bronze casting still in the Cormons collection, where one can still, to this day, find several prints on the same topic designed in different shapes and details.

Strictly connected to these works is the label of the Wine of Peace, that Darko drew in 1991, the same year of his death. In a front view and on the inside of a barrel, saint Urban rises up from a vat, with grapes and shoots winding up his crosier. The design is strictly linked to David Tuoldo's poem, printed on the same label "Friends, I feel like a vat/ of simmering pressed grapes/ after a fruitful harvest/ waiting to be emptied/ the vines are already pruned/ and ready/ for a new spring". The original drawing, an *aquatint* etching, is still kept in Cormons. In this last period Darko moulded and engraved some narrative embossements and etchings describing rural life and farm work. In an *aquatint* etching Darko portrayed the history of wine making:

vintages, treading and pressing grapes with a wine press, and the distillation that produces grappa. Some plaster embossements can be dated to this period, when Darko moulded a narrative sculpture, tied to popular and country art, where details are as important as the entire work. The high reliefs, represent country life: pork slaughtering, vintages, harvesting, treading grapes with feet in the vat, pressing grapes with a wine press, distilling grappa. Shapes are basic and Darko wanted to portray traditional country life typical of the various seasons, such as the man sharpening the sickle with the hammer, foodstuffs, alambic pots on the fire, wine presses.

To this day still not much well-known, Darko's barrels, etchings, labels, embossements that can be found in the *Cantina Produttori Cormons* are probably one of the most important collections of the artist and this collection is unique for having put together various different art forms.

### ZAMÒ WINERY: vineyard totems

In 1924, Luigi Zamò opened a tavern in Manzano, but the wine farm started when his son Tullio bought a five hectare vineyard on the slopes of Rocca Bernarda.

In the 1990s Zamò restored an old farmhouse, where the offices and the new hospitality centre were located, in a superb location on the hills of Rosazzo opposite the ancient abbey. The Abbey was founded in 800 by the hermit Alemanno



Ermacora's totems are sculptures that call to mind the poles supporting the vines. In the background the ancient Abbey of Rosazzo.

and Saint Peter's church was built between the years 1068 - 1078. Later, in 1100, it became rich and powerful.

Just in front of Zamò's farmhouse, the sculptor Giancarlo Ermacora (1942 - 2003) created his five *Steli*, vertical structures made with interlocking oak logs. The sculptures remind us of the stakes that support vines which actually serve as props for some of the vines that surround the house. The *Steli* or totems, as you prefer, shoot out of the earth four metres high and their tops are moulded with logs,



Two long and slender wooden fairies, carved by Giorgio Benedetti from a tall cypress struck by lightning.

iron, stainless steel and ceramics, joined together to symbolize the Sun and the Moon, reminding us of the hard work the land requires, strictly connected with seasons, while the blades, the Lombards and the Patriarchs are linked to the history of the ancient abbey. Giancarlo Ermacora worked a long time with Ceschia, one of the best known sculptors in Friuli, author of totems that differ from Ermacora's. Ceschia used metals, while Ermacora preferred natural materials such as stone or wood. The steel plates on the top of his sculptures

reflect the light, that changes during the day and in different seasons; the cuts in the wood, which allow you to look through it, changing 'points of view' as you walk along the slopes.

On the hill, just behind the farmhouse, two long and slender wooden Fairies stand face to face against the light of the setting sun, their hair swaying in the air. Giorgio Benedetti carved them from a tall cypress that had been struck by lightning. Giorgio Benedetti (Cividale, 1949) has a workshop in Cividale, his favourite subjects are swans and fairies with long sinuous necks, dream-girls between the abstract and the figurative.

Inside the farmhouse, in the garden from where – if one stands under a mulberry tree, which is highly symbolical for Friuli – one can admire the wonderful view stretching from the mountains to the sea; on the outside wall there is a sun dial. In the large wine-tasting hall you can admire works by Sergio Altieri, one of the most important painters of the Neorealism art movement. Altieri (Capriva, 1930) is a figurative artist and has painted landscapes crowded with people and animals. In 1998 Altieri painted the big round fireplace hood in his particular poetical style. Under a blue night sky crossed in the middle by a bright comet, between the farmhouse and a grove, the vineyards on the hills are portrayed during vintage: a cart, drawn by an ox, carries a vat full of grapes and is followed by a farmer with a hoe. Altieri was a friend of Tullio Zamò's and painted for him other canvases

representing Venice, where Silvano Zamò studied, farmhouses and even a sort of family portrait. Interior furniture shows Silvano Zamò's interest in design, he designed the new bottle labels with joyful colours and modern lettering.

### **THE PERUSINI WINERY: art and wine, a family's passion**

The Perusini family and its vineyards have a long history. Giacomo Perusini (grandfather of the present owner) preserved Picolit, the most famous traditional Friulian grape variety. He was a wise and enthusiastic vine-grower until his early death in 1915. His brother Gaetano (Udine, 1879 - Cormons, 1915) was a doctor and studied Alzheimer's neuropathology in Germany. Giacomo's widow Giuseppina Antonini Perusini (Udine, 1874 - Ippolis di Premariacco, 1975) was a painter and wrote an important book on the art of cooking in Friuli. She had two sons: Gaetano (Codognè, 1910 - Trieste, 1977) was a professor of Popular Arts and Traditions at the University of Trieste, whereas his brother Giampaolo (Udine, 1906 - Cividale del Friuli, 1985) managed the estate on the hills of Gramogliano. His twin daughters became art historians and restorers: Giuseppina teaches at the University of Udine, Teresa divides her time between studies and the family estate in Gramogliano with her husband and three sons.

After this introduction, art can be considered to be important in the Perusini winery. The main house is



The winery tower is designed by architect Romano Burelli with new materials that suit the Mediterranean area. It is influenced by the Iranian towers in Yazd. On the inside, a Foucault pendulum swings on an astrological clock.

an old 17<sup>th</sup> century mansion and its long hall is decorated with a large church ornament, representing grapes and vine leaves, restored by Teresa Perusini.

### The winery-tower

The passion for art is highlighted by the winery-tower. Built in 2000-2003, designed by the architect Romano Burelli and based on a research on new materials suitable for Mediterranean areas. The project was carried out by the Ministry for Scientific Research, the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Venice and a pool of private sponsors.

The winery-tower shows the influence of the Iranian wind towers in Yazd that cool down the desert air thanks to water evaporation. The Perusini tower, instead, maintains a temperature that is lower than the external temperature thanks

to ventilation - without air conditioning - ensuring a difference of 5 degrees (Celsius) between the inside and the outside.

The tower rises up out of an underlying foundation, covered by an internal dome, leaning against four tapered columns that recall Mycenaean architecture. The dome is built with glulam beams which act like ashlar of medieval stone vaults; the inside surface is laid with tadelakt (lime plaster and soap). The four laminated wooden floors decrease in size the higher up one goes, as one can read in the treatise on architecture, written by Jean Baptiste Rondelet (Lyon, 1743 - Paris, 1829). The floors of the tower are drilled from the top to the base and holes widen in proportion to the height, so that if someone is looking from the *barriquerie* towards the top, the tower seems higher than it is due

to optical illusion. Inside this conical opening a pendulum swings on an astrological clock drawn on the floor like the one Romano Burelli drew in the Holy Trinity Church in Potsdam. The pendulum's massive bob is a sculpture cast by Gianpietro Carlesso, a kind of armillary sphere consisting of three *bronzi* rotating inside one another.

The walls are inclined recalling old ramparts and they form a *chambre*, covered with large slabs, made by mixing resins with cotto earthenware. The tower is covered with a pavilion roof and the top floor is a kind of observation point from which one can enjoy the scenery characterized by vineyard-covered hills.

The tower's interior walls were painted by Leon Tarasewicz (Waliń, 1957), one of the leading contemporary Polish painters. Influenced by U.S.A. Hard Edge Painting as well as by Anselm Kiefer, the structure of his paintings, inspired by nature and landscapes, gradually changed from vertical stripes of intensive colours to parallel ones. From 1985 Tarasewicz began to paint directly on the walls and floors as he did in the 2001 Polish pavilion in the Venice *Biennale* and inside the Perusini's tower, that Leon Tarasewicz painted in 2004, after meeting Teresa Perusini at the *Biennale* in Venice.

In 1996 Leon Tarasewicz made a mural painting in Gabriella Cardazzo's villa in Gorizzone near Camino. Then, in 2000 – 2001, he painted the ceiling and did interior paintings in Guido Spano's "Tregelsi" villa in the same village. In



The colours are pure and sumptuous, their apparent simplicity is born from pictorial syntax and severe selection like the colours of the birds' plumage that the painter has been studying all his life.

Gramogliano the colour stripes are painted in the same order on the four walls, but colours are different owing to a very thin wash of colour: yellow towards the east, red magenta towards the west and blue on the north wall. As Teresa Perusini writes «The interaction between the painting and the landscape brings to a sort of reciprocal disclosure... what also strikes me in the tower is the unexpected relationship that has developed between the painting and the architecture. The tower is like a byzantine or orthodox church: the outside is simple but inside, it is full of colour, like a precious jewel case... Leon's painting had created an original, surprising unity with the architecture».

The Perusini estate developed the Xeno Project: putting sculptures in places that cannot be cultivated, with the aim of improving tourism and cycling in the eastern hills of Friuli. The Xeno Project (from a Greek word meaning 'stranger')



The inside walls of the tower are painted by Leon Tarasewicz. Here you can admire the interaction between the painting and the landscape and the relationship between painting and architecture.

tries to bind links between agriculture, art and nature.

The first of these works was Alessandra Bonoli's *Menhir*, which was placed on a hummock overlooking the little church of San Leonardo. The iron sculpture, 5.96 metres high, recalls the big vertical stones, wedged into the earth by ancient peoples, but is also connected to Mirko and Dino Basaldella's totems or Celiberti's steles.

Art exhibitions are organised every year in the tower cellar along with concerts and meetings. The English painter Nicholas Herdon was the first artist in 2006, then in 2008 Sergio Scabar (Ronchi dei Legionari, 1946) exhibited his photos, each a one-off, developed like in an alchemical, mysterious process.

In 2010 Gian Carlo Venuto (Codroipo, 1951) exhibited a series of his *Skies above Berlin* where he shows his interest for colours displayed on clouds. Venuto taught at the Fine Art Academies in Turin and Milan; he began his career

with an abstract style, but in the 1980s he discovered painting and figuration. In 2014 Venuto designed labels for the Perusini magnum bottles. The calla lily on the label is a homage to Tina Modotti, a world famous Friulian photographer, who lived in the USA and loved to take photos of these sensuous flowers. In 2010 summer Sonia Squillaci exhibited her giant aubergines that evoke organic sensual shapes and maternity: paper pulp modelled sculptures, charcoal drawings and aquatint engravings. In 2012 Ilaria Rotter (Tolmezzo, 1976) worked in the Perusini estate: her iron sheets covered with rust, thin laminated woods, paper, fixed the marching of time with burns, oxidations, cuts. There were also collective exhibitions such as the one performed in 2012 by Gian Carlo Venuto with students from the Fine Art Academies of Venice, Turin and Milan. Connecting art and winery is a family passion for the Perusinis in their line of succession.

In the Xeno project sculptures are set in places that cannot be cultivated. The iron sculpture by Alessandra Bonoli connects sky and earth, like a celtic menhir.



